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Alexander VI: Renaissance Pope

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ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Jonathan P. Zorich for the Master of Arts in History presented January 24, 1996.

Title: Alexander VI: Renaissance Pope.

The life of Pope Alexander VI has been the object of controversy for centuries. He has often been portrayed in terms of moral extremes. Those historians who have been critical of his methods and motives have depicted the Borgia pope as evil incarnate. For them, Alexander VI was the ultimate symbol of papal corruption. Those historians sympathetic with the church have claimed that Alexander was a slandered and misunderstood figure.

In reality, Alexander VI could most accurately be described as temporal prince so typical of the Renaissance. In many respects, he was no better or worse than any other pontiff of his age. Of all the so-called secular popes, Alexander VI has been singled out as a figure of exceptional immorality and corruptibility.

Unlike some orthodox Roman Catholic authors determined to completely whitewash the pontificate Alexander VI and the Renaissance papacy, my aim is to engage in an impartial critique of the existing evidence. We will see that Alexander VI was a typical pope of the Renaissance, obsessed with temporal concerns, sometimes at the expense of his duties as

head of the Roman Catholic Church. He was also a man completely devoted to the advancement of his family, making sure that every member of the House of Borgia was achieved the highest level of power and influence. In spite of the justified charges of nepotism, many historians have repeated many of the false tales regarding Alexander's personal character. These will be shown to based on little more than unsubstantiated rumor and innuendo.

ALEXANDER VI: RENAISSANCE POPE

by

JONATHAN P. ZORICH

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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Dedicated to the memory of Orsola Edvige Coppe, 1894-1976.

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The life of Pope Alexander VI has been the object of fascination and controversy for almost five centuries. The amount of biographical literature, both manuscript and printed, depicting the life of the notorious Borgia pope far outweighs that of any other pontiff of the Renaissance. People continue to remain entranced by the lurid tales which have come to define the infamous House of Borgia. The word alone conjures up visions of poisonous intrigue, malevolent cunning, nepotism, simony, incest, fratricide and unbridled treachery of endless description.

Alexander VI died surrounded by an atmosphere of hatred and fear so violent that Pope Julius II and all his successors refused to occupy the Borgia apartments in the Vatican, which were left neglected until the nineteenth century. Most contemporary observers and early sixteenth-century chroniclers were openly contemptuous of Alexander VI and his family. Stefano Infessura, a contemporary scribe of the Roman senate, was a virulent anti-papalist who did much to destroy the reputation of Alexander VI and other Renaissance popes. Florentine historians, Francesco Guicciardini and Niccolo Machiavelli, were the most influential originators of the Borgia legend. The former wrote at a distance about events which he had not witnessed first hand. His History of Italy,

written between 1537 and 1540, blames Alexander VI for most of Italy's misfortunes, accusing him of welcoming foreign invaders on her soil. This work's many inaccuracies and distortions were certainly influenced by his anti-clericalism and pro-Florentine political sentiments. Machiavelli's De Principatibus (later known as The Prince), a guide on how to seize power and hold onto it, was based on his observations of Alexander VI's much-maligned son Cesare, Duke of Valentino.

Only a few among the contemporary chroniclers could be described as even partially objective. Antonio Giustiniani, the Venetian diplomat who served as ambassador to the papal court from 1502 to 1505, is justifiably credited with providing great insights into the political motives of Alexander VI. Unfortunately, his reports are frequently tinged with the political biases of the state which he represented. Another important source for the period can be found in the diary of Johann Burchard, who served as the Vatican's official master of ceremonies under five consecutive pontiffs. The observations of this Alsatian cleric have proven to be of great importance in reconstructing the daily activities of the papal court. Only Sigismondo de Conti, a prominent secretary of the papal court, made an effort to chronicle the life of Alexander VI

in a sympathetic fashion.

Alexander VI has often been portrayed in terms of moral extremes. To those who despised his methods and motives, the pope was evil incarnate. They transformed him into a symbol of ecclesiastical corruption and immorality. For those in sympathy with the Church, the Borgia pope was a slandered and misunderstood figure guilty of no crime whatsoever. In reality, Alexander VI could be aptly described as a tireless bureaucrat, a man of extravagant tastes and, above all, as a temporal prince. In short, Alexander VI was a great pope of the Renaissance. We must not judge the Renaissance papacy by modern-day standards. In many respects, he was no better or worse than any other pontiff of his age. Popes Sixtus IV, Innocent VIII, Julius II, and Leo X were all powerful temporal princes of the Renaissance, but few would hold any of them up as great spiritual leaders. All were considered guilty of nepotism, simony, and other forms of ecclesiastical corruption. Most have also been accused of violating their priestly vow of chastity, and some, most notably Innocent VIII, have been accused of fathering illegitimate children. But of all the so-called secular popes, Alexander VI has been the one singled out as a figure of exceptional corruptibility and moral laxity.

There has been the tendency among modern biographers to

accept unsubstantiated charges of contemporary authors as historical fact. Some imprudent historians have betrayed their personal prejudices by repeating and embellishing tales long-discredited by more credible scholars. Others have acted more out of professional sloppiness than personal bias. If everything ever asserted about Alexander VI and his family were indeed true, their list of crimes and misdeeds would stretch into infinity. What started out as rumor and gossip has been transformed into factual evidence used to support the Borgia legend.

It is not my aim to serve as a mere apologist for Pope Alexander VI, the Borgia family, or the Renaissance papacy in general. Unlike some orthodox Roman Catholic authors determined to whitewash this entire period of history by discrediting every shred of evidence critical of their subject, my aim has been to engage in an impartial critique of the existing evidence used to justify the tarnished image of Alexander VI and the House of Borgia. We will see that Alexander VI was the typical pope of the Renaissance, obsessed with temporal concerns, sometimes at the expense of his spiritual duties as head of the Roman Catholic Church. He was also obsessed with the social advancement of his family, making sure that every member of the House of Borgia achieved the highest possible level of power and influence. The charge

of nepotism is entirely justified. It will also become clear that many of the wilder tales of wanton perfidy ascribed to Alexander VI and his two most infamous children, Cesare and Lucretia, have been based on little more than unsubstantiated rumor and innuendo.

Pope Alexander VI was a Spaniard by birth. All historians agree that he was born in the ancient town of Xativa (now known as San Felipe) in the province of Valencia, in eastern Spain. Borgia biographer Andrea Leonetti points to an ancient inscription on one of the gallery walls at the Vatican, which names Alexander VI as a Spaniard and a Valencian.[1] This fact is also established by the testimony of the contemporary Roman diarist, Jacobus Volaterranus, who reported that Rodrigo de Borgia was born in the town of Scintium (Xativa) in the diocese of Valencia.[2] Similarly, Peter de Roo reproduces a popular song of that time which tells us that Alexander VI was a Valencian from the town of Xativa.[3]

De Roo also copies an interesting contemporary Spanish manuscript (now preserved in a Dominican monastery in Valencia) that provides essential details regarding Alexander's parentage, place of birth, and early childhood. This manuscript positively asserts that the pontiff was born Rodrigo de Borja[4] in the town of Xativa; that he was a son of the nobles, Jofre de Borja and Isabel de Borja; and that he was born in said town in the house of his father, Jofre de Borja, on the square of the Borjas, near the marketplace.[5] This document also mentions that at the death of Jofre, when Rodrigo was only ten, the whole family moved to the city of

Valencia.[6]

According to documents originating from the place of his birth, the true name of Alexander VI was Rodrigo de Borja, later to be Italianized as Borgia. Nevertheless, many supposed authorities on the House of Borgia, including such writers as Frederick Baron Corvo and Ludwig Pastor, have insisted that Rodrigo had only adopted the name of Borja in order to obtain greater favors from his maternal uncle, Alonso de Borja, better known as Pope Calixtus III.[7] Baron Corvo, for example, names Rodrigo as a son of Jofre de Lancol (also spelled Lanzol). He also mistakenly lists his mother's Christian name as Juana instead of Isabel.[8] The modern Spanish writer, Orestes Ferrera, in his biography of Alexander VI, makes the point that many historians hostile to the Borgia family were eager to deny Alexander VI his noble Borgia heritage. There may also have been some confusion stemming from the fact that Calixtus III had another nephew, equally favored by him, surnamed Lancol.[9]

There is much more disagreement among historians on the time of Rodrigo's birth than on the place where he was born. It would not be possible to conclusively ascertain the true date and time of the future pontiff's birth because no surviving baptismal records from the parish of Xativa have surfaced. The aforementioned Spanish document reproduced by

De Roo is not an official record of birth, but an anonymous document dated August 1492 (the year of Rodrigo's accession to the papacy); it does not mention the year in which Alexander VI was born.[10] Most historians have placed his probable date of birth as between the years 1430 and 1432.

On January 1, 1498, Johann Burchard, who served as Alexander's papal master of ceremonies at the Vatican throughout his pontificate, made the following entry in his personal diary:

> After mass, the pope said, within my hearing, to the cardinals, that he had completed yesterday the sixty-seventh year of his life, and was born on the first day of the first week, the first day of the month and the first day of the year, and in the first year of the pontificate of Pope Eugenius IV of happy memory.[11]

According to Burchard's diary the pope clearly states that he was born on January 1 of the first year of the pontificate of Pope Eugene IV; this day was January 1, 1432. Many modern biographers of Alexander VI, like Ferrera, De Roo, and Fusero agree that 1432 is the year of the pontiff's birth.

As already stated, Rodrigo's father, Lord Jofre de Borja, died when the former was only ten years of age. Rodrigo's mother, Lady Isabel, decided to move Rodrigo, his older brother, Pedro Luis, and four sisters to the city of Valencia. Here they would be closer to Lady Isabel's brother, Alonso de Borja, who was then the cardinal of

Valencia and personal councillor to the king of Spain.[12] It is highly probable that young Rodrigo finished his classical course of studies at the academy of that city.

We know that his parents had desired him to pursue a clerical career. The exact time of his admission to the clergy of Valencia is unclear, but since he could not receive any benefice or prebend as long as he remained a secular, we may presume that he was received as a cleric shortly after having attained the legal age of seven years.[13] According to official Vatican documents, Pope Nicholas V granted Rodrigo his first privileges when he was only thirteen years of age.[14] It is reasonable to assume that Cardinal Alonso de Borja played a significant part in influencing the pope's decision to give young Rodrigo such a great honor. Three years later, when Rodrigo was sixteen years old, he was given a benefice in the collegiate church of Xativa.[15] This too, no doubt, was due to his uncle's generous influence. Rodrigo, along with his cousin Luis Juan del Mila y Borgia, continued to receive honors and benefices from Pope Nicholas V throughout their habitation in the city of Valencia, including a canonry in the Valencian cathedral. All this was done despite many lawsuits being filed with the Roman court by various clerics of Valencia who resented having been passed over for promotions in favor of Alonso de

Borja's young nephews.[16]

The date at which Rodrigo de Borgia was summoned to Italy by his uncle to undertake more serious study at the prestigious University of Bologna has been the subject of much dispute. According to a bull of Nicholas V, Rodrigo was a listed as a student of canon law in Bologna in 1453, when he was twenty years of age.[17] Michael Mallett, one of Alexander's modern British biographers, claims that university records do not mention Rodrigo de Borgia as a student until 1455, the year his uncle was elevated to the papacy as Calixtus III.[18] Pope Alexander's detractors have claimed that he had graduated from the University of Bologna in less than a year, owing mostly to the influence of his uncle, who had just been elevated to the Holy See. In fact, Rodrigo was held up as early example of how nepotism could effect a meteoric rise within the Church hierarchy. Mallett does conclude, however, that Rodrigo was summoned to study at Bologna much earlier, probably in 1452 or 1453, and the mere fact that he was the nephew of of a relatively obscure cardinal did not attract much attention or afford him any preferential treatment.[19]

It is natural to suppose that Rodrigo was a brilliant student since most contemporary writers have extolled his superior intellect and other mental qualities. Contemporary

author Giovanni Stella, for example, wrote that he excelled in both human and divine sciences and was in possession of a keen mind.[20] Uncle Alonso made sure that young Rodrigo would receive the best education possible by placing him under the tutorship of the humanist Gaspare da Verona, who kept a school for the young relatives of the higher prelates at the Vatican. Da Verona described Rodrigo: "He is handsome; with a most cheerful countenance and genial bearing. He is gifted with a honeyed and choice eloquence."[21] Blessed with his uncle's devoted patronage, in addition to his own considerable intellect and personal charisma, Rodrigo de Borgia was well on his way to reaching the pinnacle of power and influence within the Church.

On February 20, 1456, both Rodrigo de Borgia and his cousin Luis Juan del Mila y Borgia, together with Enea Silvio Piccolomini (the future Pope Pius II), were created cardinals by Calixtus III in a secret conclave.[1] Rodrigo seemed far too young for such a heavy responsibility to be laid upon his shoulders. But because he received the personal guidance and patronage of his uncle, the pope, the young cardinal enjoyed an advantage not usual for most novices.

While Cardinal del Mila was ordered to return to his post at Bologna, Cardinal Rodrigo de Borgia was appointed as legate to a troubled territory of the Papal States, the March of Ancona, with the official title of papal vicar.[2] This important post was granted by Calixtus III only a few months after Rodrigo's elevation to the purple.[3] The March of Ancona had been subjected to constant warfare and conflict for the last twenty-five years. The cardinal was granted full temporal powers and instructed to restore the peace by force if necessary.[4]

One of the many conflicts that enveloped this troubled area involved the assassination of one Giovanni Sforza, tyrant of Ancona, by a nobleman from the neighboring town of Ascoli. Said nobleman proceeded to take over his victim's place in Ancona and to exercise the same type of tyranny as his predecessor. This same nobleman was later deposed and forced

to take refuge in one of the papal castle fortresses that guarded the entrance to Ascoli. Cardinal de Borgia ordered the papal forces to attack the castle. Following a short siege, the castle was captured and the rebel nobleman sent back to Rome to face the wrath of the sovereign pontiff.[5]

Rodrigo had convincingly proved his worth to his uncle, who rewarded him with rapid promotions and lavish rewards. On January 31, 1457, he received five benefices in the Spanish dioceses of Toledo, Cuenca, Avila, Burgos and Palacios, and collected their considerable revenues.[6] Pope Calixtus III also invested his beloved nephew with the power to grant any kind of benefice, even the highest and most valuable that might become vacant within the limits of his jurisdiction as cardinal, provided their bestowal was not reserved to the Roman curia.[7] In addition, he received the power to dispense any person from illegitimate birth, so that they could inherit from father, mother or any other relative.[8]

Given the brevity of Calixtus III's pontificate (barely four years), his nepotism surpassed anything that had ever been seen before or was ever to be seen again. Having established his Borgia and Mila relatives in Rome, the pope was now determined to use the prestige and power of his office to ensure that his family would continue to thrive after his death. To this end, on February 16, 1457, under the pretext

that his nephew had no means to defray the expenses incumbent on his rank and office, the pope granted him the provostship in the cathedral of Mainz, with an income of 150 marks of silver.[9]

Duties performed by Cardinal de Borgia as legate to the March of Ancona followed one another in rapid succession. The young cardinal was busy confiscating the property of rebellious nobles under his jurisdiction. It was the Roman curia, however, that directed the cardinal on how to dispose of it. According to German historian Ludwig Pastor, the pontifical treasury acknowledged the receipt of 1,500 gold florins and proceeds from the sale of property confiscated by the order of Cardinal de Borgia.[10] He continued to build his reputation as an able and devoted administrator in the March of Ancona until the close of the year 1457. It is interesting to note that at this point in his career Rodrigo was still too young to hold his own bishopric, the canonical age being twenty-seven.

Calixtus III was now convinced that his nephew was fit to manage the most important office of the papal court. The vice-chancery had been left vacant since pontificate of Nicholas V, namely, since the death of its last incumbent, the bishop of Porto, Cardinal Francesco Gondulmaro, in 1453.[11] The pope decided to appoint Rodrigo de Borgia

vice-chancellor of the Roman Church at a time when he was already overburdened with the duties as legate to the March of Ancona. This did not deter Calixtus III, however, who quickly drew up a bull of appointment filled with lavish praise for his enterprising young nephew.

> Your eminence's uncommon activity, splendid morality, well-known refinement, kindness and wisdom, zeal for the House of God and the excellence of many of the virtues, with which the Supreme Giver of them all has made you conspicuous in many ways, besides your tested experience in the difficult concerns of the Roman Church, of which you are an honorable member; they all give us the certain confidence that, like a high and solid pillar of the same Roman Church, you will faithfully, accurately and diligently perform whatever charges we may entrust to you.[12]

In this same document, Pope Calixtus III solemnly names the cardinal as vice-chancellor with all the usual faculties and rights, honors and privileges. He also prevents and annuls all objections that might ever be made against the appointment of his nephew.[13] If indeed, there were any objections to his appointment, the pontiff was certainly in a position to override them. At least one member of the Sacred College, Cardinal Enea Silvio Piccolomini (who we know owed his elevation to Calixtus III), publicly voiced his support for Cardinal de Borgia's appointment as vice-chancellor. He went on to write, "Rodrigo de Borgia, Cardinal Deacon of St. Nicholas in the Prison, governs the chancery at present; he is young of age, it is true, but old in manners and judgement,

and he gives signs of being in learning the equal of his uncle himself."[14] Piccolomini's reference to his age indicates that some of the older cardinals were concerned about the new vice-chancellor's youth and inexperience.

The vice-chancery was, indeed, the most honorable and influential position of the Roman court. If the vice-chancellor was not a vice-pope, he was at least head of the internal organization, and his dignity was second only to that of the sovereign pontiff.[15] According to Pope Innocent VIII, the vice chancellor was "the eye of the Roman pontiff."[16] To the office of the vice-chancery were entrusted all of the most difficult concerns of the papal court and the majority of all ecclesiastical affairs. According to Volterranus, the new vice-chancellor received a yearly income of 8,000 gold florins as compensation for his arduous duties.[17]

The Spanish historian Orestes Ferrera, makes the claim that despite his innumerable benefices, the new vice-chancellor did not always have enough money for his commitments, and that he often had to borrow and even pawn the future revenues of his many benefices for long periods of time.[18] A plausible explanation for this shortage in revenue may have stemmed from Rodrigo de Borgia's ever-increasing personal expenses.

The new vice-chancellor was obliged to occupy a building from which he would conduct the daily business of his office. Cardinal de Borgia decided to occupy an old building in the Ponte quarter, which had formerly served as the Church mint.[19] This edifice, abandoned by Pope Eugene IV many years before, was already falling into ruin. Calixtus III, who was at that time under great financial stress (mainly due to his determination to raise a new papal fleet to oppose Turkish encroachments in the Adriatic), sold the old mint to his nephew for 2,000 gold florins.[20] The cardinal's expenses in transforming the former papal mint into one of the most luxurious palaces in Rome were considerable; the pope responded by granting his nephew seven more benefices in Spain to the five he had already given him the year before.[21] The palace built for Rodrigo forms the nucleus of the present Sforza-Cesarini palace on the Corso Vittorio Emmanuele. While the popes of the Renaissance were busy creating more sumptuous and suitable palaces in the Vatican, the cardinals were devoting similar energies to the construction of palaces more appropriate to their new role as princes of the Church. Rodrigo de Borgia was no exception. On the contrary, his reputation as an extravagant spender was well deserved.

Cardinal Rodrigo de Borgia held the office of vice-chancellor for the space of thirty-six consecutive years,

that is, from 1457 to 1492, when he was created supreme pontiff. In succession, Popes Pius II, Paul II, Sixtus IV and Innocent VIII maintained him in the office of vice-chancellor. By all accounts, he was an able and hard-working administrator who commanded a great deal of power, influence, and respect--this, in spite of his personal extravagances, which were considerable. Hieronymus Porcius, a contemporary writer, reported that Rodrigo carried out his duties as vice-chancellor to the honor and glory of himself and the House of Borgia.[22]

The most important and probably most welcome promotion that Rodrigo de Borgia received during his long cardinalate was the one to the episcopal see of Valencia. Calixtus III treasured this diocese, the ancestral home of the Borgia, more than any other and was determined that only his nephew would succeed him as its bishop.[23] The only serious opposition came from King Alfonso I of Naples, who wished his own nephew, Juan de Aragon, to receive the appointment. When the king died in June of 1458, a relieved Calixtus III wasted no time in announcing his personal recommendation that Rodrigo de Borgia should be consecrated as bishop of Valencia.[24]

The revenues of the Valencian see were abundant. According to Pastor, the diocese's revenues were estimated to be anywhere between 18,000 and 20,000 ducats.[25] Owing to his

many duties in Rome as vice-chancellor, Cardinal de Borgia was unable to reside permanently in his new Spanish bishopric. The daily duties of bishop had to be delegated to others. There is sufficient documentary evidence to suggest that Cardinal de Borgia's interest in his new Valencian diocese was primarily a financial one. When, for example, the payment of revenues were refused or delayed by some secular, clerical or even religious person in the diocese, the cardinal would lodge complaints with the pope, who would order the payment be submitted under pain of excommunication.[26] Official complaints of this type filed by Cardinal de Borgia regarding the payment of revenues are still preserved in the Vatican archives.

Not long after the cardinal's appointment to the see of Valencia, his devoted uncle, the pope, was struck down by a serious illness. The vice-chancellor had taken refuge from the intolerable summer heat and foul air of Rome in the hills of Tivoli when he was notified that his uncle was dangerously ill.[27] Upon his arrival in Rome, the cardinal rushed to his uncle's sickbed. The city was already in a state of complete chaos. Cardinal de Borgia's only brother, Pedro Luis, who had been appointed captain general of the papal army by their uncle, had aroused the envy and hatred of the Roman nobles, especially the Orsini and Colonna families, and was forced to

flee the city. They attacked the castle of Sant'Angelo, where Pedro Luis had taken refuge, threatening to set fire to the Vatican if he would not surrender his fortress. At great personal risk, he was able to escape Rome, with the assistance of Cardinal Pietro Barbo (the future Pope Paul II).[28]

The vengeful barons continued to take advantage of the pope's impending demise to ruin the Borgia family and incite the populace to take up arms against all Spaniards residing in Rome.[29] According to historian Ferdinand Gregorovius, Spaniards were all-powerful in Rome during the pontificate of Calixtus III. They poured into Italy from the kingdom of Valencia to make their fortune at the papal court.[30] In fact, at the time of Calixtus' death Spaniards held many of the most important offices at the Roman court. That many of these positions were held by members of the Borgia family only served to incite resentment and jealousy among the Roman populace, many of whom considered Spaniards to be culturally and morally inferior.

As death began to close in on the pontiff, the Spanish members of his household were compelled to flee for their own safety.[31] Pope Calixtus III died on August 6, 1458, in the fourth year of his reign. Not a single member of his household, nor any cardinal save his nephew, took part in the pope's final obsequies. He was buried by only four priests in

the chapel of Our Lady of the Fever, in the crypt of St. Peter's Basilica.[32] The announcement of his death was treated as a cause for celebration by the political enemies of the Borgia family, especially by the Roman barons Orsini and Colonna.[33]

While Pope Calixtus III devotedly shaped his favorite nephew's career and reputation at the Roman court, his other nephew, Cardinal Luis Juan del Mila y Borgia, was allowed to languish in utter obscurity at his post in Bologna. Nepotism was not always blind. The pope was careful to promote only those members of his family who had the ability to make the most of their opportunities. As the true founder of the Borgia dynasty, Calixtus III was mindful of setting the strongest possible foundations for his family's glorious future in Rome. The House of Borgia was great in number, but Rodrigo was singled out by Calixtus as the one best suited to carry on as head of the family after his passing.

On August 16, 1458, eighteen cardinals entered the conclave for the election of a new pope. The majority wanted to prevent the election of another foreigner.[34] When the votes were taken it was found that Cardinal Guillaume d'Estouteville of Rouen had the support of six cardinals, while Cardinal Enea Silvio Piccolomini of Siena had secured the votes of nine.[35] Neither had the required two-thirds

majority necessary for election. The stalemate was broken by Cardinal Rodrigo de Borgia, who rose up from his seat and proclaimed, "I accede to the cardinal of Siena."[36] After a prolonged silence Cardinals Tebaldo and Colonna followed his example, thus assuring Cardinal Piccolomini the required majority.[37]

Cardinal Piccolomini, having taken the name of Pius II, was crowned pope on September 3, 1458.[38] The new pontiff was a highly regarded poet-laureate, novelist, historian, and diplomat. His distinguished career as imperial orator, bishop of Siena, and then cardinal had afforded him with an excellent knowledge of politics and religion. He was more than willing to serve as mentor to energetic young men who reminded him of his youth.[39] Cardinal de Borgia had found himself a new patron and protector.

Pope Pius II did not forget the important role that Cardinal de Borgia had played in securing the election by swinging the necessary votes in his favor. To prove his loyalty, the pope requested that Cardinal de Borgia assist him in depriving his own brother, Pedro Luis, and his Spanish countrymen of their honors and revenues, thereby appeasing the wrath of the Roman barons.[40] The cardinal was more than willing to confiscate Pedro Luis' fortresses and restore to the papal treasury all the moneys that his brother had

collected while serving as captain general of the Roman Church.[41] When it came time for Pius II to vacate his benefices, as was usual after a papal election, Cardinal de Borgia was amply rewarded for his loyal service to the new pontiff.[42]

Relatively little is known concerning the activities of Cardinal Rodrigo de Borgia during the pontificate of Pius II. Peter de Roo, in his apologetic biography of Alexander VI, assumes that the lack of evidence during this period implies that the cardinal must have led a blameless life.[43] Nonetheless, even De Roo had to admit the existence of a curious letter written by Pius II admonishing the young cardinal for having taken part in a "bacchalanian orgy" in the city of Siena.[44] The original of this papal brief can be found in the pontifical register at the Vatican. Leonetti and the other defenders of Alexander VI have disputed the authenticity of this damaging document.[45] What follows is a translation of the infamous brief, dated June 11, 1460.

> We have heard that three days ago, a great number of Sienese women, attired with all worldly vanity, have gathered in the gardens of Giovanni de Bichis, and that you, little heeding the dignity which you hold, has been among them from one to six o'clock in the afternoon, and that you had for company a cardinal (commonly identified as Cardinal d'Estouteville), whom if not the honor of the Holy See, his age should have sufficiently reminded him of his duty. There has been dancing without restraint, we are told; and no allurements to love

> were spared, and you yourself have behaved as if you were one of a secular young men's crowd. I would be ashamed of specifying all that is said to have taken place there. The husbands, fathers, brothers and relatives of the young women, who had come with them, were forbidden to enter, so that you might have more freedom of enjoyment. You two, with a few attendants, were the only originators and instigators of the dances. It is said that now they speak of nothing else in the city of Siena and your foolishness is the laughingstock of all. Hence arises the contempt of princes and powers for us, hence the daily scoffing of the laity, hence also the reproofs of our conduct, when we want to reprehend others. The Vicar of Christ himself is subject to scorn, because they believe him to wink at such behavior. We leave it to you to judge whether it seems becoming your high offices to flatter girls, to send them fruit now and then, to taste wine and then have it carried to the one you like, to be the whole day long an interested spectator of all kinds of amusements. We get blamed on your account, people blame Calixtus of happy memory, your uncle, who seems to have been very much lacking in judgement when accumulating honors upon you. You should not allege your age as an excuse, for your age is not so tender anymore, that you should not understand the greatness of the burden that your dignity should sustain. It behooves a cardinal to be irreproachable, a salutary example of moral life, whose personality must be useful not only to the hearts but also to the eyes of all. We bare the shame of your conduct in this world, and in the next we shall suffer its deserved penalty. Your years, that still promise amendment, direct us to admonish you in a fatherly way. If you had allowed yourself all that at the age of your companion, we would not do you such a service of charity.[46]

Nearly all historians have noted that the brief contains no proof in support of the numerous charges leveled against Rodrigo de Borgia. Pius II repeatedly states that the charges made are based on hearsay and popular humor. Phrases like "we heard, it is told," and "they say," appear throughout the text

of the letter.[47] Leonetti points out that pope had no time to conduct an investigation into the veracity of these serious allegations, for otherwise he would have made mention of it.[48] The pope composed his monitory brief only three days after the alleged event was supposed to have taken place. It must have taken at least that long for the rumors to have traveled from Siena to the Vatican. De Roo calls the entire incident "simply ridiculous and morally impossible."[49] Authors hostile to Rodrigo de Borgia hold this letter up as definitive proof of the future pontiff's lascivious nature.

On June 14, just three days after having dispatched the first brief admonishing the behavior of his vice-chancellor, Pius II sent a second letter apologizing for having judged his actions prematurely. In this brief the pope calls Cardinal de Borgia his "beloved son" and acknowledges that he was deceived by the cardinals' accusers.[50] This retraction ended the entire affair, restoring Cardinal de Borgia to the pontiff's good graces. Most Borgia biographers either ignore or dismiss this second letter vindicating the vice-chancellor, preferring to focus on the tawdry nature of the original accusations. Borgia biographer Arnold Mathew claims that the young cardinal's conduct was "calculated to bring deep discredit upon the Church."[51] Ivan Cloulas, among the more recent Borgia biographers, has attributed Pius II's apparent retraction to

cardinal de Borgia's "shrewd" manipulations.[52] Cardinal Rodrigo de Borgia continued to serve Pius II as his vice-chancellor until the latter's death in 1464. There is no indication that his professional behavior was anything less than exemplary.

Over a period of three decades, Cardinal de Borgia used his important position at the Vatican to establish a position of power and influence in the Sacred College. The cardinal's many administrative duties at the Vatican during this period are too numerous be discussed in any great detail. The real significance of Rodrigo de Borgia's long career as vice-chancellor were the key roles he played in securing the elections of Pius II and his successors, Paul II, Sixtus IV and Innocent VIII. Pius II's successor was Cardinal de Borgia's close friend Cardinal Pietro Barbo of Venice, who chose the name Paul II. There is little doubt that Borgia lent his considerable influence to ensure the election of the man who went out of his way to help his brother, Pedro Luis, flee Rome following the death of Calixtus III.[53]

On July 26, 1471, Pope Pius II suddenly died of apoplexy and was succeeded by Cardinal Francesco della Rovere, who took the name Sixtus IV. Once again Cardinal de Borgia was farsighted enough to pinpoint the candidate with the best chances of winning. At first, it seemed that the politically

inexperienced Franciscan cardinal had little chance of success, but several influential cardinals felt that if elected Cardinal della Rovere could be manipulated into following their counsels.[54] Cardinal de Borgia, who had initially voted against Francesco della Rovere, realized that he now had a solid majority of votes. In an effort to bring the election to a conclusion, he convinced his friends in the conclave to switch their votes over to Cardinal della Rovere, thereby assuring the Franciscan the required two-thirds majority of votes.[55]

When Sixtus IV died on August 12, 1484, Cardinal de Borgia was one of the most powerful members of the Sacred College. He was now himself a candidate for election.[56] According to Cloulas, he began to scatter rewards and promises profusely in order to win over his collegues. The abbey of Subiaco--along with 25,000 ducats--was offered to Cardinal Colonna de Aragon in exchange for his support. He was also supposed to have offered his post of vice-chancellor to anyone willing to sell him his vote.[57] The charges of simony leveled against Cardinal de Borgia will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

In the early ballots a number of cardinals voted for Marco Barbo, a nephew of Pope Paul II; some voted for Borgia and some for Giuliano della Rovere, a nephew of Sixtus IV.[58]

Ferrera asserts that Borgia and Della Rovere, realizing that neither had the votes necessary to win the election, decided that the most likely candidate would be Cardinal Giovanni Battista Cibo.[59] He was descended from a noble family and, like Sixtus IV, was a native of Liguria.[60] The tactics employed by Borgia and Della Rovere were ultimately successful. Cibo was elected on August 29, 1484, and took the name Innocent VIII.[61]

It was during this period in Rodrigo de Borgia's career that his rivalry with Giuliano della Rovere first began. Both were engaged in a race for the papacy. Having failed in their bid for the papacy in 1484, both were now determined to use the weak-willed Innocent VIII in an effort to position themselves in the ideal position to succeed him. Della Rovere and Borgia were both successful in their efforts to make themselves indispensable to Innocent VIII.[62] At the time of this pontiff's demise in 1492, it seemed clear that one of these two powerful and ambitious men was destined for the chair of St. Peter.

On July 25, 1492, St. James' day, at about six or seven o'clock in the morning, Pope Innocent VIII died.[1] During the long illness which preceded the pontiff's demise, there had been much disorder in Rome, and the approaching vacancy of the papal throne was anticipated with some apprehension.[2] The cardinals were prepared to defend their independence and guarantee the rights of the citizens against attacks of the baronial factions and of the over-excited mob--attacks habitual at times when the papal throne was vacant.[3] To this end, on July 29, they ordered one hundred crossbowmen to patrol the street of Rome and an additional eight hundred soldiers to protect the Vatican palace.[4] As a result, when the pope died, the city remained relatively free from strife.

Earlier that year, another powerful Italian ruler, Lorenzo the Magnificent of Florence, had also died. His premature death at the age of forty-three led to the ascendancy of his eldest son, Piero de' Medici, who the Florentine historian Francesco Guicciardini described as not being qualified, either by age or understanding, to carry so heavy a burden.[5] He also abandoned his father's efforts to hold the Milan-Florence-Naples axis together and allied himself so closely to King Ferrante of Naples that Ludovico Sforza of Milan had very good reason to fear that whenever the Aragonese wanted to move against him, they would be assisted

by the Florentine Republic.[6] these events were to set the scene for one of the most dramatic and controversial of all papal elections.

The corpse of Pope Innocent VIII, accompanied by the cardinals whom he had created and other leading prelates of the papal court, was carried to St. Peter's Basilica on the morning of July 26, where it was laid in state in the customary manner.[7] The funeral rites were to last nine consecutive days, and Cardinal de Borgia was granted the honor of singing the first requiem mass for the repose of his soul.[8] Despite assurances from Valori, the Florentine ambassador, that the death and burial of Innocent VIII gave no occasion for any uprisings in Rome, other eyewitnesses reported that, notwithstanding the presence of the armed police, pickpockets, robbers and murderers had descended on Rome as if, at the pontiff's death, all authority within the city confines had suddenly vanished.[9]

Precautions were also taken to insure that the election of the new pope would be free from the influence of the great powers of the day, all of whom desired to have a pontiff who would best suit their designs.[10] Every time a papal election was to be held, the Sacred College was overwhelmed by every kind of self-seeking interest. In addition, the tense political situation in Italy at the time of the conclave made

it clear that worldly considerations were likely to predominate over purely spiritual ones. Vatican observers were soon hard at work assessing the political affiliations and the economic potential of each of the possible candidates.[11] This in itself was an immediate indication of the kind of election which was generally expected.

The Sacred College at that time was composed of twenty-seven cardinals. Two of these were in petto--that is to say nominated but not formally proclaimed. Four cardinals were not present in Rome at the time of the conclave. Therefore, only twenty-three actually voted in the election.[12] The four cardinals absent from Rome were: Luis Juan del Mila y Borgia, Cardinal of Los Cuatro Coronados; Pedro Gonzalez de Mendoza, Cardinal of Santa Croce; Andres Spinay, Cardinal of San Martino, and Pierre d'Aubusson, Cardinal of St. Adrien.[13] These absentees were all foreigners, that is to say non-Italians. Two were Spaniards and two were Frenchmen. Del Mila y Borgia was Rodrigo de Borgia's cousin and Gonzalez de Mendoza owed Borgia his elevation.[14] Had they been able to participate in the election, both cardinals would have been sure votes for Cardinal de Borgia.

When reviewing the list of electors, one cannot help but notice that almost all of them represented the richest, most illustrious and powerful families in the Italy of that day.

Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, for example, was the brother of Ludovico il Moro, the future duke of Milan. Eighteen year old Giovanni de' Medici, afterwards Pope Leo X, was a son of Lorenzo the Magnificent. Members of the powerful Colonna and Orsini families of Rome were also well represented in the Sacred College.[15] In addition, four nephews of Sixtus IV were among the electors, including Giuliano della Rovere, the future Pope Julius II.[16]

According to Guicciardini, Borgia's election to the papacy was primarily due to the fact that he had "openly bought many of the cardinals' votes in a manner unheard of in those times."[17] Ferrera is correct when he suggests that it would have taken a great deal of time--not to mention a great deal of money--to purchase the consciences of such wealthy and powerful men, assuming that their consciences were for sale.[18] The Borgia fortune was not enormous enough to purchase, a Medici, a Colonna, an Orsini, or a Sforza, to say nothing of the enormously wealthy Venetian cardinals who were much more likely to purchase votes than they were to sell them.

The conclave for the election of the next pontiff was to be held at the Vatican, in the Sistine Chapel of St. Peter's Basilica. On the morning of August 6, 1492, the cardinal electors entered the Sistine Chapel, gathering beneath its still undecorated ceilings. The entire day was spent

inspecting the place of their temporary seclusion and installing themselves in their cells to prepare for the serious work of the following day.[19] Each cell would be occupied by several cardinals, who used them at night to sleep. The entrance to the chapel was securely locked and guarded against any interference from without and to prevent any disclosure from escaping from within.

It has generally been recognized by most historians that the Sacred College was roughly split into two groups. On the one side was Giuliano della Rovere, nephew of Sixtus IV and the predominant influence on Innocent VIII. Although his natural affiliations were with France and the court of King Charles VIII, to which he was papal legate, he was now being strongly supported by Ferrante and the kingdom of Naples. He was also heavily supported by the Genoese.[20] If Rodrigo de Borgia had indeed owed his election to simoniacal practices, he would have had to outbid the combined treasuries of Genoa, France and Naples, which were all clearly at Giuliano della Rovere's disposal.

Against this formidable base of support for Giuliano were ranged Ascanio Sforza and the Milanese. With relations between Milan and Naples deteriorating, this purely political division of the college was inevitable. Sforza, like Giuliano della Rovere, could rely on heavy financial support from his

political allies. Della Rovere could count on the votes from the members of his family who had been elevated by Sixtus IV, as well as those of the Genoese and Venetian cardinals, Michele, Fregoso, and Cybo.[21]

When members of the conclave realized that the winner was likely to be an Ascanio Sforza, who stood for his brother Ludovico and his ambitions to upset the balance of power of the Italian states, or a Giuliano della Rovere, who appeared to be under the obligation of France, Naples and any other foreign state who would support his candidacy, their base of support began to erode.[22] The cardinals quickly realized that neither Sforza's nor Della Rovere's political connections would serve the interests of the Church.

After having given up any hope of ascending the papal throne, at least on this occasion, Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere began to lobby for the election of Cardinal da Costa of Portugal and that of the Venetian Cardinal Zeno.[23] Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, who likewise had to accept the undeniable fact that his familial and political connections would serve to undermine his own election, lobbied for the candidacy of the universally respected Cardinal Oliverio Caraffa. The Sforza camp included Cardinal Ardicino della Porta, a fellow Milanese, and Cardinals Riario and Piccolomini, who shared a general dislike and distrust of Giuliano della Rovere.[24]

Finally, there is strong evidence that Cardinal Rodrigo de Borgia, at least in the early stages of the election, was also a strong supporter of the Sforza camp. His own chances of being elected pope seemed small at first, probably because he did not seem to have any direct support from any European or Italian powers, while his Spanish blood was considered a handicap in an election where twenty-one of the twenty-three electors were Italians.[25]

Three scrutinies or ballots are known to have taken place in the conclave. On the authority of the Florentine ambassador, Valori, it was claimed that the first ballot took place on Wednesday, August 8, the second on Thursday, August 9, and the third on Friday, August 10. The indications that these votes were taken were based on the tiny emissions of black smoke from the conclave chimney, caused by paper ballots cast at an unsuccessful election.[26] The two-thirds majority needed to ensure an election was not reached during the first three scrutinies.

According to official Vatican documents, the fourth ballot, taken on August 11, 1492, resulted in the unanimous election of the vice-chancellor, Cardinal Rodrigo de Borgia of Porto.[27] The Florentine ambassador, Valori, wrote the day after, that Cardinal de Borgia was proclaimed sovereign pontiff under the name Alexander VI. He was elected, after a

long contest, without a single dissent.[28] The contemporary historian, Sigismondo de Conti, who knew Borgia well, wrote that all of his colleagues in the conclave judged him to be a man worthy of the supreme pontificate.[29]

Other historians refute the claim of a unanimous election, free from simoniacal corruption. Pastor, for example, reduces the number of electors of Pope Alexander VI to fifteen, the required two-thirds majority.[30] He further states as an undeniable fact that "the wealth of the Spanish cardinal was destined to turn the scales in the conclave."[31] Caraffa and Costa, two "worthy men," were estimated to have the best chance of winning the election. Unfortunately--again according to Pastor--Cardinal Sforza allowed himself to be corrupted by Rodrigo de Borgia, who promised him the office of vice-chancellor along with his own palace, the lavishly furnished castle of Nepi, the bishopric of Erlau with a revenue of 10,000 ducats, and other valuable benefices.[32]

Pastor goes on to recount how bribes were also promised to Cardinals, Orsini, Colonna, Savelli, Pallavicini, Michele, Sclafenati, Sanseverino, Riario, and Domenico della Rovere. By these simoniacal means, counting his own vote and those of Cardinals della Porta and Conti, who belonged to Sforza, Borgia had successfully secured thirteen votes and was short just one to secure the two-thirds majority and the election.[33]

This last vote came from the senile Cardinal Gherardo (Pastor makes him ninety-six years of age, but most other sources give his age as eighty-two). Pastor concludes by stating that the papacy was obtained for Cardinal de Borgia through the "rankest simony" and that "the days of distress and confusion began for the Roman Church on the day of his election."[34]

According to the diary of Stefano Infessura, scribe of the Roman senate and sworn enemy of the papacy, only five of the cardinals of the conclave (Caraffa, Costa, Zeno, and Giuliano della Rovere) had the courage to resist Borgia's overtures, and pledge to give their votes "gratis" (without payment) at the papal election.[35] Pastor claims that in addition to the aforementioned five, Basso della Rovere, Cybo, and Medici also spurned Borgia's attempts to corrupt the election in his favor.[36]

In fact, on the authority of Burchard, young Cardinal de' Medici remarked to his colleague Cardinal Cybo, "We are in the jaws of a rapacious wolf! If we neglect to flee, he will devour us."[37] Whether or not Giovanni de' Medici actually expressed himself in such terms remains a mystery; there is no evidence to either prove or disprove it.

To further tarnish the reputation of Alexander VI and the legitimacy of his election, Infessura reported that five mules laden with gold were seen to enter the courtyard of Sforza's

palace, to be guarded there during his confinement at the conclave.[38] This silver was supposedly a payment given to Ascanio in return for his support of Borgia's candidacy.[39] There is every indication, however, that Sforza would have supported Borgia's election without any promise of a reward.[40] Even Gregorovius claims Infessura's assertions against Rodrigo de Borgia to be "mere fables."[41]

The charges of simony made by Guicciardini, Infessura, Pastor and others, can be easily discounted. The fact is that the purchase of votes was virtually impossible in a conclave unless it had been largely prepared beforehand. According to a famous Roman proverb, "He who goes into a conclave a pope, comes out a cardinal."[42] During the conclave all of the cardinals were required to live, packed close together, in the narrow confines of the Sistine Chapel and its adjacent cells. Besides, these powerful, politically savvy men must have been constantly monitoring each other's activities with a suspicious eye. It would not have been easy to carry out nefarious or clandestine activities--such as simony-- without arousing a major conflict among the participants.[43] It is important to note that Alexander VI was not unique in being targeted as a purveyor of simoniacal practices. The same charges were made during the conclaves which elected Sixtus IV, Innocent VIII, Julius II and Leo X.[44]

When a cardinal is elected pope he is required to automatically vacate all of his benefices. As soon as Cardinal de Borgia became Alexander VI, he was obliged to distribute the many possessions he had acquired during his long career.[45] Cardinal Ascanio Sforza was a trusted friend of Rodrigo de Borgia and it seems quite natural that he would have entrusted him with the important office of vice-chancellor following his election as pope. All of Alexander's benefices were promptly distributed to all members of the Sacred College, even to those cardinals who that Pastor and Infessura claim refused to "sell" Borgia their votes. Cardinal de' Medici, for example, received highly prized benefices from the new pope, like all the others.[46] Even Giuliano della Rovere, Borgia's greatest rival before and after his election as pope, received innumerable favors. There is no evidence that these benefices were promised to any one person in particular before or during the election.[47]

By 1492 a realization, both of the increasingly secular nature of the papacy itself and also of the seriousness of the political situation of the time, led the Sacred College to abandon their more "saintly" candidates like Caraffa and Costa and choose a man who was noted more for his administrative abilities and his keen political instincts than for his spiritual virtues.[48] The prevailing political climate called

for a strong, politically experienced pontiff to preside over the interests of the Church. He had to be able to stand on equal footing with a Piero de' Medici, a Ludovico Sforza, or a Charles VIII. The cardinals who elected Alexander VI realized this all too well. Cardinal Rodrigo de Borgia was a hard worker and the one best versed in administrative and financial issues. He had been a cardinal for thirty-six years and served as vice-chancellor under five consecutive popes. In short, he was clearly the most qualified candidate for the papacy at that time. His election exemplified, more unequivocally than ever before, the changed nature of the Renaissance papacy.

Pope Alexander VI's children are few or many, depending on the whim of the individual historian and the period at which he is writing. The resulting confusion surrounding the issue of Borgia's paternity will never be fully resolved. The swirl of conflicting accounts regarding this central issue has permanently tarnished the reputations of Alexander VI and the House of Borgia--not to mention the papacy itself. After five centuries of rumor, innuendo and outright slander, it has become very difficult to separate truth from fiction.

Most authors have credited Rodrigo de Borgia with four children: Giovanni, Cesare, Lucretia, and Gofredo. Some have added a fifth sibling, Pedro Luis.[1] Their mother was probably the mysterious Vanozza de Cataneis, of whom precious little is known. Gregorovius suspects that she was of an old Roman family born in July 1442 and imagines her to be "a strong and voluptuous woman like those still seen about the streets of Rome."[2] Mathew claims that she must have possessed a remarkable magnetism to have exercised such a permanent attraction on a cardinal of the Church.[3] He also insists, based upon the authority of Pastor, that their relationship must have begun in 1460, during the pontificate of Pius II.[4] Of the contemporary chroniclers, few have even acknowledged her existence. Burchard's diary mentions a certain "Donna Vannozza" in only one entry, and only in reference to her

sons, Cesare and Giovanni.[5] The are no authentic documents that link anyone named Vanozza to Rodrigo de Borgia. The only piece of evidence we have identifying her as the mother of the pope's supposed children comes from the inscription on her grave at the church of Santa Maria del Popolo.

> To Vanozza de Cataneis, ennobled by her children, Duke Cesare of Valentino, Gofredo of Squillace, and Lucretia of Ferrara, and equally conspicuous for her goodness, her piety, her age and her wisdom. Girolamo Picus, fiduciary commissioner and executor of her will, erected this monument in memory of the great services rendered by her to the Lateran Hospital. She lived seventy-six years, four months and thirteen days. She died on november 26, 1518.[6]

While there seems to be general consensus as to the identity of the four Borgia siblings' mother, the true identity of their father has remained a topic of controversy among historians committed to the vindication of Alexander VI's life and pontificate. Peter de Roo, in his attempt to redeem the image of the House of Borgia, has concocted an elaborate theory explaining why Rodrigo de Borgia could not have been the father of Vanozza's children.[7] According to this theory, the true father was a certain Guillermo Raimundo Lancol y de Borja who married Vanozza in Spain. All of their children were born in that country and raised as Spaniards. Therefore, Cardinal de Borgia, who was then serving as vice-chancellor at the Vatican, could not have been their

natural father.[8] Ferrera lends some credence to this unusual theory but acknowledges, as does De Roo, that this name does not turn up on any Borgia family genealogical tree.[9]

Other historians have also come up with their share of bizarre theories concerning this matter. Frederick Baron Corvo makes the astounding claim that Cesare's father was no less a person than Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, the future Pope Julius II and one of Alexander VI's bitterest rivals. He believes that this theory would explain the hostility which always existed between them.[10] Equally absurd claims have also been made by historians like Ollivier, who names Giulia Farnese as Cesare's mother![11] This woman, often considered to be Rodrigo de Borgia's other mistress, was about the same age as Cesare. Mathew is sure that Rodrigo de Borgia had fathered not four but at least seven illegitimate children by several women.[12]

While most of these theories depicting young Cardinal de Borgia as a depraved despoiler of women have been largely discredited, the conclusion that he must have therefore led a perfectly chaste life seems unlikely. The princes of the Italian Renaissance--even ecclesiastical ones--devoted much of their time to matters other than affairs of state. Most of them had casual mistresses and a number of semi-permanent ones as well. Being born out of wedlock was was not a great

handicap during this time. Pius II remarked, "Most of the rulers of Italy were born out of wedlock."[13] He was referring, among others, to Ferrante I, King of Naples; Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan; Borso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara and Federigo da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino.[14]

The weight of evidence points to Rodrigo de Borgia as the natural father of Lady Vanozza's four acknowledged children. His much-rumored affair with young Giulia Farnese is less likely. We know that Giovanni, Cesare, Lucretia, and Gofredo received many favors and honors from the future Pope Alexander VI. They all attained high social positions. The duke of Gandia married Maria Enriquez, King Ferrante's cousin; Cesare de Borgia married the daughter of the king of Navarre; Lucretia married the powerful duke of Ferrara; Gofredo married the daughter of the king of Naples and became a prince.[15] Why such devotion? If De Roo is right in asserting that Vanozza's children by Guillermo Raimundo Lancol y de Borgia were only distant relatives of the cardinal and not his natural children, than the loving attention that he lavished on them throughout their lives makes no sense. Cardinal de Borgia was a member of a very large family, but its on these four particular children that he devoted a majority of his energies, sometimes at the expense of his ecclesiastical duties.

De Roo's claim that Vanozza's children could not have belonged to Rodrigo because they were all born in Spain is disputed by many historians.[16] According to Joan Haslip, Lucretia was born at Subiaco, some sixty miles east of Rome in April 1480.[17] Gregorovius agrees and claims that Lucretia spent her early years at her mother's house on the Piazza Pizzo di Merlo, only a few steps from the cardinal's palace.[18] The birth of Vanozza's two eldest sons, Giovanni and Cesare, probably occurred between 1474 and 1476. Sabatini, in his biography of Cesare, writes that all four were born in the city of Rome.[19] We know that all four wrote and spoke Spanish fluently, but this does not mean that they were native-born Spaniards. Lucretia, for example, was taken from her mother's house at an early age and placed under the care of Adriana del Mila, a cousin of Rodrigo de Borgia.[20] It was probably through her tutelage that young Lucretia acquired her fluency in Spanish. Cesare and Giovanni spent a greater part of their youth in Valencia.[21] This would explain why they were able to speak with a fluent Valencian dialect.

One can only make reasonable assumptions regarding the paternity of Rodrigo de Borgia. The passage of time and the absence of credible documents make it impossible to be completely sure, either way. What we do know is that Borgia, before and after becoming pope, treated the four children of

Vanozza de Cataneis as his own. He was able to manipulate the passive Lucretia into marrying a succession of prominent Italian princes. When he wanted to connect the House of Borgia with the powerful duchy of Milan, she was betrothed to Lord Giovanni Sforza of Pesaro. When that alliance crumbled, Borgia promptly used his position as pope to annul her marriage.[22] His desire to put a Borgia on the throne of Naples led to Lucretia's betrothal to Alfonso, the illegitimate son the Aragonese monarch. Finally, after the brutal murder of her second husband, the pope pushed her into a marriage with Alfono d'Este, heir of the duchy of Ferrara.[23]

Borgia's sons were treated in much the same way. Giovanni and Gofredo were both married into the House of Aragon. Originally, Cesare was destined for an ecclesiastical career. Alexander VI made him a cardinal in 1492 when he was barely seventeen. He also inherited the bishopric of Valencia, which had also been held by his father and his great-uncle, Calixtus III.[24] The number of benefices granted to Cesare rivaled those received by his father. When it became clear that Cesare was ill-suited for the life of a priest, the pope provided him with a special dispensation.[25] In return, Cesare agreed to marry Charlotte d'Albret, daughter of King Louis XII of Navarre.[26] Alexander VI expressed a paternal concern for the children of Vanozza de Cataneis that

made it easy for contemporary observers to assume that he was indeed their father. As for definitive proof, that may never be forthcoming.

As we have already noted, the primary concerns of the Sacred College when electing a new pontiff were more political than spiritual. The gradual secularization of the Holy See meant that popes were more likely to behave like temporal princes, concerned with military and political intrigues, than bastions of Christian virtue and leadership. In this respect, Alexander VI was no different than his predecessors Sixtus IV and Innocent VIII or his successors Julius II and Leo X. All of these pontiffs were, at least to some extent, guilty of using their sacred office in advancing their own self interests at the expense of the Church. That does not mean, however, that we should accept every rumor and accusation impugning their moral character as an indisputable fact. Many modern historians continue to copy, as the truth, most of the scandalous tales involving Alexander's personal life.

Much of the infamy which has grown around the Borgia name is directly related to Alexander's supposed liaison with a young lady of the Roman court, Giulia Farnese, also known as Giulia the Beautiful. Most modern writers have repeated and amplified the charges of the original accusers who, as we shall see, were completely lacking in credibility.

Giulia Farnese was the daughter of the Roman baron Pierluigi, lord of Farneto, Ischia, Caprarola and Capodimote, and of Giovanuella Caetani, whose father, Honoratus II, was

lord of Sermoneta and its vast dependencies.[1] The Farnese family belonged to an old Etruscan line which had, for centuries, belonged to the Guelf party and from which came the condottieri, whose services were sought by many of the great powers of Italy.[2] Giulia's mother was a Caetani, and so a member of an old and noble Roman house.

On May 21, 1489, Giulia was married to Orso Orsini, the son of Ludovico Orsini, Lord of Bassanello, and of Adriana del Mila, who was the daughter of Pedro del Mila, lord of Mazzalaves, the first cousin of Alexander VI, who was still Cardinal de Borgia, at that time.[3] It was through this marriage that Giulia Farnese became a relative of Alexander VI. Gregorovius, in his biography of Lucretia Borgia, asserts that this sham of a marriage was instigated by Cardinal de Borgia himself, and that almost immediately, after compelling her young husband to live apart at one of his country estates, he had made Giulia his mistress.[4] This lurid scenario is quite improbable. The civil ceremony, which took place at Borgia's palace, was attended by the Caetani and several of the Orsini, in particular Cardinal Gianbattista Orsini.[5] As Ferrera correctly points out, it would seem unlikely that these high figures in Roman society would lend themselves out to this obscene farce to win the favors of a man who was not yet pope but only a cardinal.[6] In addition, Gregorovius

claims that the pontiff, presumably in an effort to keep his mistress under his watchful eye, installed Giulia in the palace of St. Mary in Porticu, as a court lady to Lucretia Borgia.[7] This assertion is baseless for the simple reason that Giulia's rank, at this time, was far superior to that of Lucretia, who was more likely to serve as a maid of honor to Giulia.[8]

The legend of Alexander's relations with Giulia is not founded upon any serious or reliable information. In fact, most contemporary chroniclers of Alexander VI, Johann Burchard being the most obvious example, make no mention of a relationship of any sort between the pope and Giulia Farnese. The only contemporary source of the supposed affair is to be found in the questionable diaries of Stefano Infessura. Most modern historians, including Pastor and Gregorovius, readily admit that Infessura is no longer considered a credible source. Ferrera describes him an enemy of all popes. The slanders he used against Alexander VI are the same kind that he used to tarnish the reputations of Sixtus IV and Innocent VIII.[9]

One must be mindful of the fact that no original text of Infessura's diary is still in existence. His work has been altered and rewritten at the whim of numerous copyists and translators. In Tommasini's edition of Infessura's Diario,

for example, there is only one passage, "Iuliae bellae eius concubinae," ("Giulia the beautiful, his concubine") referring to Borgia's illicit relationship with the young Roman lady.[10] Other manuscripts simply refer to her as the wife of Lord Orsini.[11] This single passage slandering Giulia as the pope's "concubine" has been repeated and improved upon by historians ever since.

Gregorovius accuses Alexander VI of allowing Giulia to exert undue influence upon him for the advancement of her relatives.[12] In 1493, the pontiff had manifested his intention of increasing the membership of the Sacred College.[13] On September 24 of that same year, Alexander VI created twelve new cardinals, including Cesare Borgia, aged only seventeen, and Alessandro Farnese, pronotary apostolic of the Vatican and brother of Lady Giulia.[14] According to Gregorovius, Alessandro Farnese owed his elevation to his sister's adultery with the pope. He goes on to say that this "fact" was so widely known that the Roman populace called him "cardinale della gonnella," or cardinal of the skirt.[15] This slanderous nickname has not been traced back to any contemporary source, but most historians still keep referring to it in connection with Farnese's elevation to the cardinalate.[16]

It is probable that Alessandro Farnese would, sooner or later, have become a cardinal no matter who was pope, for the

simple reason that he had belonged to the highest ecclesiastical hierarchy from his childhood and to a noble Roman family.[17] In fact, it was Innocent VIII, not Alexander VI, who first advanced young Farnese's career by naming him pronotary apostolic. Ferrera points out that men who held this office, especially from early youth, had a "first-rate" chance of advancing to the purple.[18] When we examine the list of cardinals from that day, we find, as a general rule, a large representation of the Roman nobility. Alexander VI added a Farnese to a list which included an Orsini, a Savelli, a Conti and a Colonna. Sigismondo de Conti, the papal secretary under Alexander VI, wrote that Farnese was nominated at the request of the Roman populace.[19] The Farnese family had a reputation, stemming from their long association with the Guelf party, of being the staunchest supporters of the papacy and had a long record of service within the Church hierarchy.[20] Cardinal Farnese was held in such high esteem by the people and his collegues that, in the year 1534, he was unanimously elected pope, under the name Paul III.

Further proof is put forth by historians who wish to establish an illicit affair between Alexander VI and Giulia Farnese in the form of a letter written (or more accurately, dictated) by the pope to his daughter Lucretia, in which he scolds his supposed mistress for departing from Rome without

his permission. Said correspondence, written on July 24, 1494, is held up by both Pastor and Gregorovius as strong proof of Alexander's liaison. This letter, addressed to Lucretia Borgia, not Giulia Farnese, contains the following passage:

> Donna Adriana and Giulia have arrived at Capo di Monte where they found her (Giulia's) brother dead. This death has caused deep grief to Cardinal Farnese as to Giulia and both were so cast down that they caught the fever. We have sent Pietro Carianca to visit them, and we have provided doctors and all things necessary. Let us pray to God and the glorious Madonna that they may quickly recover. You have truly not shown great respect or consideration for us in the matter of this journey of Madonna Adriana and Giulia, in that you let them go without our permission; you should have remembered that such a journey, undertaken so suddenly and without consent, could not but cause us extreme pain. You will say that they decided upon it because Cardinal Farnese had wished it and arranged it; but you should have asked yourself if it was to the pope's taste. The thing is done now, but another time we shall look to it better and shall consider in what hands we place our affairs.[21]

The pope is complaining to Lucrezia that "Madonna" Adriana del Mila and Giulia had set out upon a journey without the pope's consent, and he makes a veiled threat to entrust his affairs to other hands in the future. Pastor claims that because the pope was so annoyed at Giulia's departure, there must have been an adulterous affair between them.[22] If one reads the letter in its entirety, however, it becomes clear that the pontiff's annoyance is with Adriana del Mila, who,

unlike Giulia Farnese, was an employee of the Vatican. In addition to being Alexander's cousin and Giulia's mother-in-law, she served as a kind of majordomo, in charge of the pope's household.[23] There is no real hint of scandal in this rather innocuous correspondence, save the fact that Giulia is mentioned only in passing.

Pastor tells us that any further doubt of the pope's illicit affair with Giulia is dispelled by the letters of one Lorenzo Pucci, dated December 23 and 24, 1493.[24] The first letter, addressed to Pucci's brother, reveals his opinion that Giulia's newborn daughter, Laura, was the very likeness of the pope himself.[25] Later, in that same letter, he repeats his opinion by saying, "She is the child of the pope and the putative daughter of Signor Orsini, to whom our master (Alexander VI) intends to give three or four more castles near Bassanello."[26] Lorenzo Pucci was the brother-in-law of Giulia's sister Isabella and was a frequent guest in the Orsini home.[27] This does not mean, however, that his impudent remarks are to be interpreted as irrefutable proof of Alexander's paternity. Pucci was a protege of Cardinal Farnese and a close friend of Giulia's family. His remarks are more likely to be private, irreverent jests between one brother to the other.

More credible proof that Laura was the daughter of

Giulia's husband, Lord Orso Orsini, and not a child of the pope can be found in several official Vatican documents. The first, dated April 2, 1499, lists Laura as the "legitimate and *natural daughter of Lord Orso Orsini*."[28] *The second*, dated March 1, 1502, names Laura as "the beloved daughter and heiress of the late Orso Orsini."[29] Finally, in November 1505, the notary public of the papal palace, in the presence of Pope Julius II, issued a contract of marriage between Lady Laura Orsini, "Lady Giulia's and the late Lord Orsini's legitimate and natural daughter," and the pontiff's nephew, Niccolo della Rovere.[30] It is inconceivable that Julius II, Alexander's most formidable and bitterest enemy, would have consented to the marriage between Laura and his nephew if he had the least suspicion that Alexander was the girl's father.[31] At that time, Alexander VI was hated by nearly all the nobility of the Pontifical States. Julius II, for his part, detested everything associated with the Borgia and would certainly not have admitted the daughter of Alexander's concubine into the fold of his family.[32] Gregorovius reproduces the first two documents in his biography of Lucretia, but dismisses them as worthless by claiming that Giulia's child officially passed as her husband's natural daughter even though the pope was her real father.[33]

Despite the lack of evidence, not to mention the absence

of all common sense and logic, most modern historians continue to assume that Alexander VI was engaged in unbridled seduction in an attempt to satisfy his insatiable lust. Many continue to repeat the tales of Vasari, who saw the face of the pope's concubine in the image of the Madonna which decorates the entrance to the Borgia apartments.[34] Others claim that Giulia is the figure of the Madonna in Raphael's Transfiguration.[35] Forbidden sex continues to remain at the heart of the Borgia mystique. Nevertheless, even though Alexander VI was, perhaps, the most secular of the Renaissance popes, his reputation should not be ravaged by unsubstantiated slander and villification.

Pope Innocent VIII had felt the need to make more room at the apostolic palace and had begun the building of an addition, called the Belvedere, at the northern end of the Vatican lawn.[1] His death prevented the work from being finished, but his successor, Alexander VI, on July 24, 1492, ordered the final completion of this edifice, now used mainly as a museum.[2]

The pontiff also discovered, alongside St. Peter's Basilica, at the other end of the lawn, the abandoned beginnings of a vast building project, which had been neglected ever since the death of Pope Nicholas V in the year 1455. Determined to complete this still-missing fortified section along the western entrance to the Vatican, the pope hired workmen to build upon these older foundations a massive two-story edifice, which he named the Borgia Tower (or Torre Borgia).[3]

The apartments which were chosen by the new pope to serve as his personal dwellings were, in addition to those located in the first floor of the Borgia Tower, the rooms in the palace of Nicholas V and one room that belonged to the old palace of Nicholas III.[4] These spacious halls became known as the Borgia Apartments. The individual rooms which made up this section of the Vatican palace are, to take them in order, the Sala delle Sibille and the Sala del Credo (in the Borgia

Tower); and the Sala delle Arti Liberali, the Sala di Santi and the Sala dei Misteri (in the palace of Nicholas III). Despite their original intent, the apartments were never used by either the pope or his family as personal living quarters. They were, in fact, used as reception rooms, the so-called "secret cabinets."[5]

The pope commissioned the famed painter Pinturicchio[6] of Perugia with the decoration of the rooms. De Roo asserts that Pinturicchio's old teacher, Pietro Perugino, was also commissioned to paint some of the frescoes in the apartments, but since he was living and working exclusively in Florence between 1486 and 1499, it is unlikely that he participated in the project.[7] It can be said, however, that Pinturicchio, like many other artists of his day, was assisted in his work by helpers, mostly his own students.[8] Work began almost immediately after Alexander VI's accession, in November 1492. Documents which report on the progress of the artists indicate that the decoration of the rooms must have been completed by the beginning of 1494--at least in those sections for which Pinturicchio and his assistants were responsible.[9]

Giorgio Vasari, in his influential Lives of Painters, Sculptors and Architects, begins the chapter on Pinturicchio by noting:

> Even as many are assisted by fortune

> without being endowed with much talent, so, on the contrary, there is an infinite number of able men who are persecuted by an adverse and hostile fortune; whence it is clearly manifested that she acknowledges as her children those who depend upon he without the aid of any talent, since it pleases her to exalt by her favor certain men who would never be known through their own merit.[10]

Vasari goes on to conclude that Pinturicchio has a much greater name than his work deserves. Pinturicchio's lush and decorative style so typical of the Umbrian school was already being ridiculed as backward and provincial--especially in contrast to the then prevailing Tuscan style of painting. His penchant for splendor and pomp, as well as frequent use of gold for decoration, corresponded perfectly with the pope's own personal tastes.[11] The magnificent palace that the pope built for himself while yet a cardinal is a clear indication of the lavish lifestyle to which he had now become accustomed.

Pinturicchio and his assistants began their work toward the end of 1492 in the Sala dei Misteri. It is in this room that one finds the Annunciation, Nativity, Epiphany, Resurrection (with the famous and astonishingly realistic portrait of the pontiff), the Ascension, the Pentecost, and the Assumption.[12] The Borgia coat of arms (a red bull on a field of gold) appears again and again and is represented many times on the priceless marble frieze that winds its way beneath the frescoes in the Sala dei Misteri; it is usually

attributed to a disciple of Mino da Fiesole and not to Pinturicchio.[13]

In the well-known depiction of Alexander VI in the Resurrection, he is shown kneeling in adoration next to the empty tomb of Christ, with his tiara laid beside him. The cloak, of gold brocade, is jewelled at the edges, but only at the shoulder and at the feet is it original and richly manipulated; all the rest was damaged and has been retouched. The hands, adorned in light gloves, are flattering, as is the whole profile of the head, with the freshly shaved hair and the soft pink flesh. It may also be noted, as one can see from the eye-socket and the folds of he cheek, that the head catches the light from below, which seems to indicate that the pope himself posed on the scaffolding where Pinturicchio was at work.[14]

At the time of the portrait, Alexander VI was sixty-one years old, but he still appeared to be full of vigor. This supports the descriptions of his contemporary, Hieronymous Porcius,[15] who in 1493 wrote of him, "Alexander is tall and neither light nor dark; his eyes are black and his lips somewhat full. His health is robust, and he is able to bear any pain or fatigue; he is wonderfully eloquent and a thorough man of the world."[16]

It is this perception, exemplified by Porcius, of

Alexander VI as "a man of the world" that led Vasari, among others, to imagine that the portrait of the pope's supposed mistress, Lady Giulia Farnese, is to be found among the many frescoes of the apartments. Vasari indeed writes that Pinturicchio "painted above the door of a room the portrait of Lady Giulia Farnese in the face of the Madonna, and, in the same picture, the head of Pope Alexander VI adoring her."[17] Gregorovius also insists that that Pinturicchio painted a portrait of the Virgin with the face of Lady Giulia.[18] Many other writers have imagined such portraits adorning the walls of the Borgia Tower, but Pastor insists that there are no such pictures in any of the rooms which correspond with Vasari's description.[19]

The most famous painting, not only of the Borgia Apartments, but of Pinturicchio, is undoubtedly the large scene of St. Catherine Disputing with Philosophers before the Emperor Maximinus, which occupies the large lunette of the wall opposite the window in the Sala dei Santi. In the triangular panels of the Sala dei Santi historical episodes are combined with allegorical themes, and oriental and pagan myths with the lives of the saints.[20] The ceilings, for example, are decorated with images depicting the Egyptian myths of Isis and Osiris. They are overloaded with small figures and arabesques in stucco gilt, with medallions and the

Borgia coat of arms spread out overhead, but many of the details are strikingly beautiful.[21] The pomp and richness of the decorations in this room have caused it to be looked upon as the masterpiece of the whole.

The scene of the Dispute of St. Catherine is broken into two large lateral groups, divided towards the middle, leaving the field open to a few prominent figures. One of these, a philosopher, seen almost from behind and wearing a yellow cloak, blue robe, and red biretta, points out a passage in a book held by a young page. He is elegantly dressed but badly distorted by retouches, as are also two wise men standing close by. Near the page stands the slender figure of St. Catherine. Her likeness has also been damaged by time, although the rather sloppy efforts of untold restorers have not entirely removed her gracious original features nor the stream of flowing yellow hair that covers her shoulders. St. Catherine's crown, in relief, has almost completely disappeared and her hands (she is shown marking off each of Emperor Maximinus' questions on her fingers) have been badly retouched.[23]

The figure of St. Catherine has generally been considered to be a portrait of Lucretia de Borgia; Vasari intimates that the pope's daughter personally posed for Pinturicchio.[24] This, however, seems unlikely since Lucretia, at the time of

the portrait, was a mere thirteen years of age, and the figure of St. Catherine in the fresco is at least twenty.[25] Gregorovius seems more than willing to accept the legend as fact and plainly identifies the figure of the saint as being that of Lucretia.[26] Mathew stands alone in his claim that the figure of St. Catherine was painted with the features of Giulia Farnese.[27]

The figure of Emperor Maximinus, with a pointed beard, long hair, and an intent expression, is shown casually seated on his throne. His robe is replete with glittering ornaments. Many have seen the face of Cesare de Borgia in the figure of the emperor, but this is not very plausible since Maximinus is portrayed as man in his thirties and Cesare was, in 1493, hardly eighteen years of age![28] The man to the left of the emperor, with the drooping moustache, is supposed to be a portrait of Byzantine emperor Andreocu Paleologus. Recognizable behind this personage are Antonio de San Gallo, the architect, holding a square, and Pinturicchio himself, a thin-faced figure with dark hair.[29]

Less injured is the figure of the standing Turk facing the spectator (with white turban, white robes flowered with blue and red designs, his badly repainted hands in his girdle, his mantle disfigured by retouches)[30] who stands on the other side of the emperor's throne. This turbaned oriental is

thought to represent Prince Djem (or Zizim), son of Mohammed II, brother of Bayezid II (known as the Grand Turk) and personal prisoner of Alexander VI.[31] In 1489, during the pontificate of Innocent VIII, Djem was brought to Rome after being captured in Rhodes by the Knights of St. John. Innocent's successor, Alexander VI, was paid an annual tribute of 40,000 ducats[32] by Bayezid II to keep the prince a closely guarded prisoner and so to prevent him from pretending to the Turkish sultanate.[33] The prince was a conspicuous member of the pope's court and may certainly have been Pinturicchio's inspiration for the imposing Turk in St. Catherine's fresco. Others, however, believe that Djem is not the standing Turk near Maximinus's throne, but the Turk on the white horse on the opposite side of the fresco. This figure also wears a large white turban and gold brocaded cloaks over his shoulders. Vatican guides will tell you that this is not supposed to be a portrait of Prince Djem, but that of Giovanni de Borgia, Duke of Gandia.[34] This theory is supported by Burchard who writes that the young duke could often be seen at public functions draped in gaudy Turkish costumes.[35]

According to art historian Maurizio Calvesi, the Turkish costumes worn by the figures in Pinturicchio's frescoes were probably painted from life; the artist reproduces them accurately and they contribute much to the exotic atmosphere

to which the frescoes in the Borgia apartments owe their charm.[36] Pinturicchio, as already mentioned, delighted in splendor and luxury, as well as the astounding effects of decoration.[37] The colorful pageantry illustrated in Pinturicchio's work is actually but a reflection of day-to-day life as it was lived at the court of the worldly-minded Borgia pope.

During the pontificate of Alexander VI, the apartments were lavished with care and attention, but not long after his death in 1503, they were completely abandoned. For many Romans, these rooms conjured up unpleasant remembrances of a now much-despised pope; They became an embarrassing symbol of the opulent excesses of the Renaissance papacy. Today they offer a small glimpse of the luxurious lifestyles of the Borgia family and their circle. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Borgia Apartments occasionally served as lodgings for those cardinals who were in Rome during papal elections. Later, they were even used as prison cells or as dining rooms for minor Vatican officials.[38]

As the year 1493 drew to a close, relations between Ferrante of Aragon, King of Naples, and Pope Alexander VI were deteriorating at an ever-increasing pace. Ferrante was constantly complaining of the too amicable relations between the pope and King Charles VIII of France. On December 18, 1493, he wrote the following in letter to his envoy in Rome:

> We and our father (King Alfonso I) have always been obedient to the popes, and yet, one and all, they have invariably done us as much mischief as they could; and now, although this pope is a countryman of our own, it is impossible to live with him a single day in peace and quiet. We know not why he persists in quarrelling with us; it must be the will of heaven, for it seems to be our fate to be harassed by all the popes.[1]

In other correspondences, the king continued to accuse the pope of breaking promises and doing nothing to hinder French designs on Naples.[2]

King Charles VIII's plan was to conquer the distant kingdom of Naples in the name of the House of Anjou, whose rights he had inherited at the death of his father, Louis XI, in 1483.[3] The French House of Anjou had lost this kingdom in 1442 when its ruler, Ranier, was expelled by Alfonso I of Aragon. Ferrera points out that King Ranier himself had only won the throne of Naples by driving out the House of Suabia.[4] Charles VIII, claiming that Anjou's rights to Naples were inviolable, saw the usurpation by the Aragonese as illegal and made preparations to win back the kingdom.

Italy was a rich and populous country and Naples one of its most brilliant states, but the probability is that the French king's interest in it was no more than a youthful whim. In 1492, the Venetian ambassador to France, Zaccaria Contarini, left us a telling description of Charles VIII.

> His Majesty the King of France is twenty-two years of age; he is small and ill-made, ugly of countenance, with large, colorless eyes. He is short-sighted; his nose is aquiline and both longer and thicker than is natural. He has lips likewise thick and always hanging open; his hands twitch with spasmodic movements very ugly to see and his speech comes hesitantly. My opinion may be erroneous, but it seems to me certain that physically and morally he does not amount to a great deal.[5]

King Ferrante's last months were spent in constant anxiety over France's claims upon his troubled kingdom. The news of his death reached Rome on January 27, 1494.[6] The primary question of the day was centered around what policy the pope would adopt in regard to the old king's successor, Alfonso II. Charles VIII wasted no time in dispatching an embassy to Rome. Alfonso II, for his part, was doing everything possible to win the favor of the pontiff. As early as February 1494, 1494, it became clear that Alexander VI was in full support of the Aragonese; French envoys received stern warnings not to make any attacks upon Naples.[7]

On April 18, Alexander VI convened a consistory and commissioned his kinsman, Cardinal Juan Borgia, to crown

Alfonso in Naples. The French embassy in Rome threatened to depose the pontiff by calling for a general council. This extreme measure was supported--if not encouraged--by Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere. This dangerous enemy of Alexander VI had his own eye on the Chair of St. Peter and was willing to use any means to replace him as supreme pontiff. The bull appointing a legate for the coronation of Alfonso of Aragon as king was drawn up anyway.[8] Cardinal della Rovere, having been won over to the French cause, fled Rome by sea on April 24. He was soon to serve as a powerful weapon against the pope.

The motive for Alexander's support of the House of Aragon seems clear: On May 8, 1494, the pope's youngest son, Gofredo de Borgia, married Alfonso's illegitimate daughter Sancia.[9] Gofredo became prince of Squillace and received a yearly income of 40,000 ducats. His brothers, Giovanni and Cesare, were not to be forgotten: The former received the principality of Tricario, and the latter was rewarded with additional ecclesiastical benefices.[10] On May 9, Alfonso II was crowned king of Naples.[11] While it is true that the pope's support for the Aragonese cause benefited the House of Borgia, iis motivation was not entirely self-serving. The possible invasion of the peninsula by an armed foreign power was something that no Italian ruler would wish for (this, at least, was Machiavelli's theory).[12] The destruction and chaos

caused by such an invasion could only threaten the already precarious temporal authority of the papacy.

Ironically, it was the Italians who played the greatest part in persuading Charles VIII to invade their country. The French king could already count on the friendship and support of Giuliano della Rovere, but he was now cultivating alliances with the Colonna and Savelli families in Rome.[13] In Milan, Ludovico il Moro aided Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere's flight to France. The rebellious cardinal eventually made his way to the camp of Charles VIII. In their first meeting, the king informed the cardinal that he desired to have him at his side at his meeting with the pope. The cardinal continued to call for a general council to proceed against Alexander VI. This man, whose own career in the Church was devotedly crafted by his uncle, Sixtus IV, accused the pope of gross nepotism. He also proclaimed his "sincerest" desire to reform the Church by removing a pontiff who owed his election to rampant simony.[14] These hypocritical and unfounded charges posed a serious danger for Alexander VI and the Holy See.[15]

The eventual isolation of the pope and Naples proceeded at an alarming rate. The Republic of Venice made the decision to remain neutral in the dispute.[16] Ludovico il Moro, often regarded as the principal instigator of the French invasion, was looking for a solution to a personal problem.[17] The

duchess of Milan, an ambitious and energetic woman, was the daughter of the Alfonso II, the new ruler of Naples. She was married to Ludovico's ailing brother, Gian Galeazzo, the rightful heir to the duchy of Milan, while Ludovico was relegated to the role of regent; he enjoyed the power but not the title of duke. Ludovico's hatred for the House of Aragon was well known, and he reasoned that as long as Naples remained in their hands, his desire to take full control of Milan would remain unfulfilled.[18] Ludovico, as early as 1491, acted as the staunchest supporter of France's policies in Italy.

On August 11, 1494, King Charles VIII, secure of his friendship with Ludovico il Moro and of the neutrality of Venice, commanded his armies to begin their march on Italy. He was now determined to use force to make good the old, but unjustifiable, claims of the House of Anjou.[19] In addition, he was confident that the pope could be bullied into granting him the investiture with the kingdom of Naples. Ludovico undertook to furnish the French with five hundred lances and to allow them to equip as many ships at Genoa as they should find necessary. In return, the king pledged to defend the duchy of Milan and Ludovico's authority.[20]

The French crossed the Alps on September 2 and three days later they had entered Turin. They met with no resistance.

At Asti the king was greeted warmly by Ludovico il Moro and Ercole d'Este of Ferrara (the future father-in-law of Lucretia de Borgia).[21] The invaders continued to move south, crossing the city states of Pavia and Piacenza, where the king was notified of the death of Gian Galeazzo, duke of Milan.[22] By the time Charles VIII reached Tuscany, the French had met with such little resistance that they could scarcely believe their good fortune. On October 26, Piero de' Medici, despot of Florence, entered the French camp and quietly surrendered.[23]

On their arrival at Pisa Charles VIII and his army were welcomed by its citizens as liberators from the tyranny of Florence. It was here, on November 9, that the king received the great Dominican preacher, Fra Girolamo Savonarola.[24] In one of his Lenten sermons of 1494, he had announced the arrival of a new Cyrus who would cross the Alps and lead his army in triumph through the whole of Italy. According to Savonarola's prophecy, Charles VIII was to be the instrument of God's vengeance on the people of Italy, and on Rome especially.[25] The ease with which the French overran the Italian peninsula served to give additional credence to the preacher's predictions. Savonarola greeted Charles VIII as the most Christian King of France and implored him to further the cause of reform within the Church of Rome.[26] At the same time, he warned the king to show mercy on the people,

especially the Florentines, for otherwise he would feel the wrath of God.[27]

On November 17, the French army entered Florence. The mobs greeted them with shouts of "Viva Francia!" After some negotiating, it was agreed that Charles should be given the title of protector and restorer of Florentine liberty. He was also rewarded with 12,000 gold florins.[28] At this time, the people of Florence were consumed with hatred for the Medici and under the spiritual influence of Fra Girolamo. All Florentine fortresses formerly occupied by the exiled Medici were placed under French control. It was at this time that Ludovico and the Venetians, seeing the ease with which the French were advancing through the Italian countryside, began to suspect that Charles VIII had more than the conquest of Naples on his mind.[29]

The pope was completely helpless before the rapid progress of the French in Italy. The King of Naples, having lost confidence in the pope's resolve, feared that the king would call for a general council to depose him. Cardinal della Rovere was already poised to bear witness against Alexander's alleged corruption and to take his place as supreme pontiff.[30] Cardinal Ascanio Sforza was counseling the pope, on behalf of his brother Ludovico and the French, to abandon his support of Alfonso II, or at least remain

neutral.[31]

Historians hostile to Alexander VI have claimed that the pope was too paralyzed by fear and indecision to act against the French.[32] The fact was that there was simply nothing that the pope could have done to prevent Charles VIII's progress through Italy, or his eventual entry into Rome. Milan, Venice, and Florence were already lost to the French. The papal army was insignificant in comparison with the combined French, Swiss and German mercenary forces of Charles VIII. Besides, as Machiavelli himself observed, the power of the Vatican was often checked by the treachery of the Roman barons, who often acted against the interest of the Holy See.[33] In fact, as the French were fast approaching the Porta del Popolo, the Colonna family had effectively blockaded the city by land and sea.[34]

Charles VIII continued his march upon Rome, occupying the fortified palaces he found on his way. Virginio Orsini, a general under the service of the king of Naples, and the entire House of Orsini formally switched sides and entered the king of France's service.[35] In the face of such treachery, the pope was given offers of asylum from Spain and Venice, but, in the end, he decided to remain in Rome. Towards the end of December, the king of France sent an embassy to meet with the pope asking for free passage through the city of

Rome. Realizing that the French were already moving freely over the Church's territories, the pope granted the king's request.[36]

The king of France promised to respect all the rights of the pope, both temporal and spiritual; the whole of the city on the left bank of the Tiber was to be occupied by his troops, who had been arriving in detachments since December 27.[37] Alexander VI remained in his palace at the Vatican, under the protection of his Spanish bodyguard. Ludovico il Moro, who was now in secret opposition to the French enterprise in Italy, was advising the pope to deny the French passage through his territory.[38] The irony of this turnabout must not have been lost on the pontiff.

Charles VIII's triumphant entry into the city of Rome was made on the last day of 1495 under the advice of astrologers. At the Porta del Popolo, the keys of all the city gates were handed over to the king's grand marshal. The cardinals Ascanio Sforza and Giuliano della Rovere rode beside the king, followed closely by the other cardinals in support of the French cause. The procession of troops entering the city lasted from three in the afternoon until late in the evening.[39] According to Burchard's diary, the troops were greeted with enthusiastic shouts of "Francia! Colonna! Vincula! (Giuliano della Rovere)" as they arrived before the

palace of San Marco.[40] De Roo claims that the Roman people expressed such jubilance more out of fear than for anything else.[41]

No time was wasted in establishing diplomatic contact between the two sovereigns. Charles VIII sent an embassy to the Vatican outlining the royal proposals. The king demanded the possession of the castle of Sant'Angelo, the appointment of the pope's son, Cardinal Cesare de Borgia as legate (in reality to serve as his hostage), and the assurance of complete amnesty to all cardinals and barons who had joined the French. He also demanded that Prince Djem, who was under the personal protection of the papacy since the reign of Innocent VIII, be released to his custody. Above all, he demanded investiture with the kingdom of Naples.[42] The possibility of a general council was also implied as a consequence to non-compliance.The pope rejected the king's demands and ignored his threats. He prepared for French retaliation by surrounding himself with 3,000 soldiers in the castle of Sant'Angelo.[43] Despite their threats, Charles VIII tried to discourage the rebel cardinals from summoning a general council to depose Alexander VI; his main objective of gaining investiture with the kingdom of Naples from the pope would only be delayed if a such a council were convened.

A swift resolution of the standoff between Charles VIII

and the pope was essential. The people of Rome were being subjected to all forms of barbarism by the restless occupational troops. On January 8, for example, Swiss and French troops ran rampant through Rome's Jewish quarter, going from house to house robbing and murdering everyone in sight.[44] No Roman citizen was safe from such atrocities. On that same day, soldiers plundered the home of Vanozza de Cataneis, the mother of Cardinal Cesare de Borgia. Burchard claimed that on January 13, at least one half of the city was sacked by the French. In one day, the estimated damage to the city amounted to some 40,000 ducats.[45]

On January 16, 1495, an agreement was finally reached between Charles VIII and Pope Alexander VI. To begin with, the king agreed to pay the pope for all provisions confiscated by his army on its continued march across Church territory. Cesare de Borgia was to accompany the army as its papal legate for a period of four months. Prince Djem was also to accompany the French, but he was to be returned to Rome following the Neopolitan campaign; the pope would continue to collect the yearly ransom of 40,000 ducats from the sultan. All Italian allies of the French king were to receive a complete amnesty. Lastly, upon his departure from the city, the king was to return the keys to all bridges and gates to the pope. The agreement contained nothing about the

investiture with Naples.[46]

Alexander VI--not to mention the Roman populace--sighed in relief as Charles VIII and his armies broke camp and continued their journey to Naples. Against formidable odds, he was able to retain all temporal and spiritual authority as supreme pontiff. Above all, he denied Charles VIII the investiture with Naples and thereby preserved his alliance with King Alfonso. As for his beloved son Cesare, he was able to escape French custody just a few miles south of Rome. Prince Djem was not so fortunate. He died (some claim poisoned) while under French custody later that year.[47] In any case, the pope was still able to collect his precious ransom from Bayezid II. Those historians who accuse Alexander VI of acting in complicity with Charles VIII should also make it clear that this pope made very pragmatic--even wise--decisions which salvaged his pontificate and the authority of the Church.

The aims of the internal policy of Pope Alexander VI, from his elevation to the Holy See in 1492 to his death in 1503, were to free Rome and the Pontifical States from the rebellious assaults of his vassals, the kings of Naples and the Roman barons; and to regain control of the various cities and territories of the Church from the despotic princes, who, appointed as governors by the pontiffs, acted as independent lords and had become oppressors to their subjects.[1]

His foreign politics had but one object. It was uniquely directed towards the preservation of the Christian religion and civilization from the incursions of the Moslems, especially the Ottoman Empire. With this end in view, the pope was engaged in sincere efforts to foster union and peace among the Catholic princes of Europe and urged them to combine their forces against their common enemy.[2] Like most of his predecessors, Alexander VI was zealously committed to maintaining the power and influence of the Church over the peoples of Europe. The "infidel" Turks were perceived, not without reason, as the most obvious external threat to the Church's dominions.[3]

Alexander's unabashed nepotism and worldly aims in politics cast a baleful shadow over his efforts to stave off Ottoman advances into Europe. The pope's reputation with European rulers acted as a direct hindrance to his efforts

against the Turks, but its indirect effects were perhaps still more injurious; for no one trusted him, and whatever he put his hands to was believed to have, as its ultimate aim, nothing but the aggrandizement of the House of Borgia.[4] Nevertheless, as we shall see, even such a man as Alexander VI could not remain inactive in the presence of impending invasion from the East. In fact, throughout his reign as supreme pontiff, Alexander VI was continuously preoccupied with efforts to organize a crusade.

No sooner had Cardinal Rodrigo de Borgia been raised to the chair of St. Peter as Alexander VI than he manifested the principal aim of his pontificate. In announcing to the people of Rome his unanimous election, he declared his intention to follow the example of his uncle, Pope Calixtus III; and he asked their prayers, that God may give him strength to repel and destroy, with aid of Catholic kings and princes, the power of the Turks.[5] This proclamation, to destroy all these so-called infidels as enemies of the Church, was not an uncommon one for newly elected pontiffs. It is inaccurate, however, to assume that Alexander VI, as head of the much-maligned and mistrusted Borgia dynasty, was not sincere in his efforts to defend Christian Europe from foreign invasion. One can say, however, that the motives behind most of the pope's actions against the Turks were invariably

questioned, especially by his Venetian allies.[6] Pope Alexander VI well knew that the first condition of possible success against the Ottoman Empire was the establishment of peace and concord among the European powers, along with their concerted action. Valori, the Florentine ambassador in Rome, reported that the pope, as early as January 1493, had impressed upon the Christian princes the need for mutual understanding and of a general expedition against the Turks.[7] Encouraged by the favorable response of the seigniory of Florence, he pledged to set an example by preserving peace in Italy by refusing to make war on the Orsini family (his most dangerous and powerful enemies in Rome).[8]

While the pontiff was endeavoring to reconcile the major European powers, during the months of July and August 1493, the Ottomans made destructive incursions into the territories of Carniola, Styria and Croatia, which were ruled by the Holy Roman emperor, Maximilian I.[9] During their raid, the Turks laid siege to the city of Segna (or Zengg) in the western part of Croatia. Vatican documents show that the Pope made an effort to provide material and spiritual assistance to its inhabitants. On July 31, 1493, he issued, in their favor, a bull granting a plenary indulgence[10] to all Christians who, after a worthy confession, would visit the church of Segna and

contribute alms. These would be expended exclusively for the defense of the city and its district.[11]

Earlier that same year, Turkish armies had begun to make advances toward the Kingdom of Hungary. By September, the Turks controlled Hungary's southern territories as far as the city of Gyula.[12] These incursions led Alexander VI to send a papal legate to Ladislas, King of Hungary and Bohemia, John Albert, King of Poland, and to the princes of those territories subject to both kings. The aim of this mission was to reconcile the two monarchs, bringing an end to the dissensions which kept those two kingdoms divided, and to establish an accord which would enable them to band together in resistance to Turkish encroachments on European soil.[13] The legate was also instructed to publish, in the lands of King Ladislas, a bull offering a plenary indulgence to all Christians of Hungary and Bohemia who would assist in King Ladislas' expedition to halt the Turkish advance and regain those territories lost to Sultan Bayezid II.[14]

The indulgence was offered to all those who would enlist in the king's army for the period of six months. Also, by anyone who would, at his own expense, send a man to replace him in the army. Likewise, if ten or more men would, according to their financial means, combine to pay the stipend of one soldier, taking their place in the king's army, all of

them together would gain the indulgence. The indulgence could also be gained by the preachers of the word of God, to those who would publish the bull, or celebrated masses or other divine offices in the camps for the army, as well as by anyone lending assistance to the sick or wounded. Finally, the indulgence could be gained by persons who would promote the expedition against the Turks by contributing a sum of money determined, according to their standing, by the papal legate. All contributions were supposed to be deposited in the parish church where the fund was collected.[15]

The presence of the sultan's grand fleet of ships in Constantinople caused a great deal of fear and anxiety in the Venetian Republic and especially to the Knights of St, John of Jerusalem, whose headquarters, the island of Rhodes, was assumed to be one of its first targets.[16] The pontiff was willing to grant Venice all possible assistance in its preparations for naval warfare on the assumption that it was fighting to defend the Holy Faith as well as its own temporal interests. Many indulgences were granted to those who, for the defense of religion, opened their treasuries for the benefit of Venice. According to the writings of Cardinal Pietro Bembo, the Republic of Venice received the sum of 709 pounds of gold.[17] Alexander VI, for his part, also promised to equip, twenty galleys, at his own expense, of which fifteen

were afterwards armed in Venice and the others at Ancona.[18]

Alexander VI, who, when yet a cardinal, had been the official protector of the Knights of St. John, was greatly alarmed at the new dangers facing Rhodes.[19] On June 30, 1494, the pope, in an effort to strengthen the Order, issued a bull which confirmed all their possessions, privileges, and exemptions obtained by former pontiffs, and ordered the restitution of all their real property which had been illicitly destroyed or appropriated.[20]

The invasion of Italy by King Charles VIII of France in 1494 resulted in the disruption of peace among the European princes, as well as the ruin of all hopes for a general expedition against the Ottoman Empire. The pope was now confronted by the hostile Turks in the East and a foreign invader on Italian soil who had the power (and inclination) to overthrow him. After careful and exhaustive negotiations, Alexander VI finally succeeded in forming a league with Maximilian I, Holy Roman Emperor; Ferdinand and Isabella, kings of Spain; and the doge of Venice. This alliance, known as the Holy League, was solemnly proclaimed in Rome on Easter Sunday, April 12, 1495.[21] The immediate effect of this treaty was a swift withdrawal of King Charles VIII from the Italian peninsula. A period of relative peace followed after the formation of the League between the sultan and the European

powers.

The year 1498 marked the passing of the antagonistic King Charles VIII and the accession of his successor, Louis XII. On June 4, Alexander VI dispatched a papal envoy to personally congratulate the new king on his accession to the French throne.[22] The pope's primary instruction to the envoy was to encourage the French sovereign to make war on the Turks. Alexander himself wrote to the new monarch:

> From the time of our assumption to the supreme pontificate, it was always our desire, as it is a duty of our pastoral office, to set on foot an expedition against the Turks, the perpetual enemies of our faith; to follow, with help from God, the example of our uncle, Calixtus III, and of Pius II, and moreover, to offer our person for the same expedition. Circumstances have so far prevented the realization of our wish; but your elevation is for us and for all Christianity like a star indicating that, now, with your help, we can happily commence the undertaking.[23]

In addition, he ordered his ambassadors to the French court to solicit Louis XII not to assail Ludovico Sforza, duke of Milan and the king of Naples, as his predecessor had done, so that the Italian powers and princes might remain united and strong in their struggle against the Turks.[24]

The pope's council had little positive effect. The following year, the duke of Milan, perceiving an immediate threat by King Louis XII, implored Bayezid II to come to his assistance by attacking the Venetians, close allies of the

French.[25] Emperor Maximilian I, loyal to his Milanese brother-in-law, sided against Venice, which resulted in an immediate dissolution of the Holy League. The sultan, fully prepared for war, readily agreed to assist Milan by attacking Venice by land and sea.[26]

For some time past, the Turks had been busily occupied in strengthening their armaments, and especially their navy. When all preparations were completed, the sultan, without any formal declaration of war, began to arrest all Venetians in Constantinople. Venice was taken completely by surprise. To make matters worse, the finances of the republic were very low, and to meet the expenses of fitting out a new fleet, it was necessary to raise all tolls and taxes and to impose new ones.[27] All officials of the republic were required to surrender half of their salaries to the state treasury, and the clergy was obliged to contribute one third of its revenues (this with the Pope's consent).[28] The total number of ships added to the Venetian fleet peaked at 130. This number, however, was no match for the sultan's combined fleet of 270 sail.[29] The end result, on August 26, was the loss of Lepanto, the only important sea port in the Gulf of Corinth that still remained in the hands of the Venetians.[30]

As a direct consequence of the increasingly negative reports which continued to arrive from the East, Alexander VI,

in late Autumn of 1499, issued forth notifications to all Christian princes to send representatives to Rome in an effort to form a new league against the Turks.[31] The pope received no answer to this initial call for a special congress and was obliged to send forth new notifications the following year.

On March 11, 1500, a consistory finally took place, to which were called all ambassadors present in Rome. Those in attendance included: The envoys of Emperor Maximilian, the ambassador of France, the envoy of King Henry VII of England; two envoys from the King of Naples, the ambassador of Spain. and the envoys of Venice, Savoy and Florence.[32] The pope described to them the imminent danger to all Christian Europe from the "barbaric" Turkish invaders and pressed the need for a general expedition, or crusade, against them. He also praised the Venetians for their resistance to Turkish aggression and implored the other European powers to come to their assistance.[33] Ultimately, the pope's efforts to elicit any substantive commitments were in vain. The Roman emperor and the king of France expressed only marginal interest in the proposed expedition and the other powers spoke only in general terms of support, without committing themselves to any action.[34]

On the 1st of June, 1500, Alexander VI published a bull addressed to all Christendom, setting forth the supposed

crimes of the Ottomans and their hatred of the Christian religion, and urging all to unite against the common enemy.[35] The purpose of the Turks, it affirmed, was first to conquer Rome and then to subjugate all the Christian populations. Consequently, through such inflammatory rhetoric, the Roman Church had now formally declared war against the hereditary foe.

To meet the expenses of the contest, a tithe was to be levied on all ecclesiastical benefices without exception, and on all the officials in the states of the Church.[36] Cardinals, prelates and all other clergymen were ordered to "donate" a tenth of their yearly income. The Jews were required to contribute a twentieth of their property to the Christian cause.[37] This crusade-bull was to be publicly read in the vernacular on some feast-day in all the dioceses of the world.

In the spring of the following year, the pope began to collect the contributions of the cardinals, out of which a fleet was to be equipped. The tax list, which has been preserved, is interesting as it gives the yearly incomes of the different cardinals. What follows is a partial list.

		Ducats.		Ducats.
Card. G. della Rovere.....	His income,	20,000	To pay	2000
" " Zeno.....	"	15,000	" "	1500

"	"	Juan Borgia.....	"	10,000	"	"	1000
"	"	Peraudi.....	"	3,000	"	"	300
"	"	Orsini.....	"	10,000	"	"	1000
"	"	Francesco Borgia.....	"	3,000	"	"	300
"	"	Piccolomini.....	"	9,000	"	"	900
"	"	Ascanio Sforza.....	"	30,000	"	"	3000
"	"	de' Medici.....	"	6,000	"	"	600
"	"	Colonna.....	"	3,000	"	"	300
"	"	Ippolito d' Este.....	"	14,000	"	"	1400
"	"	Lodovico Borgia.....	"	10,000	"	"	1000
"	"	Sansoni.....	"	18,000	"	"	1800
"	"	Giovanni Michele.....	"	12,000	"	"	1200[38]

The tithe was to be paid within the time set by the papal legate (or tax collectors) for a period of three years, and to be expended for works against the Turks and nothing else. The payment of the tithe was to be made under pain of excommunication and loss of all offices, dignities and benefices for all who might try to oppose, neglect or defraud it. The pope ensured that provisions would be made to show that all moneys proceeding from these tithes would be spent for the expedition and for no other purpose.[39] The collections seem to have been satisfactory, especially in Rome. The tithes paid each of the three years by the Sacred College amounted, according to Burchard's diary, to 35,000.[40]

The collection of the tithe was not so successful outside of Italy. Germany remained indifferent and found ways to avoid all payments despite assurances by the pope that all moneys brought in by the tax would be exclusively devoted to the Turkish war. Neither at the German court nor throughout the Empire was it believed that this would be carried out. Maximilian went so far as to refuse the papal legate permission to enter the Empire. It was not until the 11th of September, 1501, at the Diet of Nuremberg, that the pope was at last successful in coming to an agreement with the assembly and the imperial government.[41]

King Henry VII of England objected to this additional burden imposed on the English clergy, but he eventually consented to a subsidy that would be freely donated for the defense of the faith. The Archbishop of Canterbury convened a special council on February 14, 1501, in St. Paul's Church in London, where it was decided to send to Rome, for the war against the Turks, the generous sum of 12,000 pounds.[42] What follows is a list of the special contributions made by the archdiocese of Canterbury and each of its suffragan dioceses to fund the crusade against the Turks:

	Pounds.
Archdiocese of Canterbury	959
Diocese of Rochester	126

" " Winchester..... 973

" " Salisbury..... 1228

" " Chichester..... 427

" " Norwich..... 1883

" " Coventry..... 524

" " Hereford..... 345

" " Worcester..... 564

" " London..... 871

" " Lincoln..... 2759

The amounts contributed by the archdiocese of York and its suffragan dioceses are not given.[43]

This tithe of the clergy contributed in England for the defense of Christianity never found its way to Rome. Many of the European princes felt they had reason to mistrust the pope's motives and sincerity and were reluctant to release funds for a crusade which might never take place. On July 4, 1502, the pope complained to the Venetian ambassador, Antonio Giustiniani that King Henry VII had required one half of all amounts collected for himself as a reward for granting permission to collect contributions in his kingdom; and he added:

> After some 60 to 70,000 ducats had been gathered, objections were made to the payment of our portion, because some pretended that we had made no armaments nor any other preparations against the sultan; which was a flagrant untruth,

> for we did all we could. We were forced to make another agreement with the King, namely, that we would receive 15,000 ducats and all the surplus should go to his personal account. Until this] day, we have not received a penny.[44]

The king of France was occupied with plans which had no connection with the war against the Turks. The French clergy were extremely irritated against Alexander VI for having imposed the tithes without previously acquainting them with his purpose and asking for their consent.[45] Many openly opposed it and appealed to a general council against whatever censures they might thereby incur. The Jews of Avignon also resisted the crusade tax, but they were eventually forced to comply.[46]

At the end of May 1501, a league was at last concluded between Hungary, Venice and the Vatican, despite the general apathy of the majority of European powers.[47] Alexander VI pledged to contribute 40,000 ducats annually for as long as the wars with the Ottomans should last. Venice promised 100,000 ducats and the prosecution of the war at sea, while Hungary undertook to attack the Turks on land. Unfortunately, the secular nobles of Hungary, while not averse to war, were unwilling to hand over to Rome the moneys collected from indulgences or the crusade tax.[48]

To meet the Turks on the sea, the Venetians were hurriedly repairing and strengthening their fleet, and the

pontiff sent fifteen of his forty galleys to be armed in Venice.[49] To cover the expense he paid, on May 3, 1501, the sum of 15,250 gold ducats.[50] The league could also rely on some well-manned vessels of the Rhodesian Knights of St. John of Jerusalem. Still, their combined fleet was hardly strong enough to confidently encounter numerous warships of the sultan. Reinforcements from France and Spain were especially desirable, if not indispensable.[51]

Alexander VI had often requested the help of the French and Spanish kings in his crusade against the Ottoman Empire, but without much success. Eventually, the shared ambitions of both monarchs in regards to the kingdom of Naples was to give the pope an opportunity to ensure their cooperation. Ferdinand of Spain and Louis XII had long resolved to dispossess the King of Naples and divide his beleaguered kingdom among themselves. On June 28, 1501, the pope readily drew up a bull of partition and investiture of Naples in the presence of the French and Spanish envoys.[52] Alexander VI claimed that the Neopolitan king, Frederick of Aragon, had been secretly plotting with the Sultan of Constantinople to the detriment of Christian Europe. With this pretense, the pope felt himself justified in giving France and Spain what they had long coveted. In return, both Louis XII and the kings of Spain bound themselves to join their vessels with the

papal, Rhodesian and Venetian fleets, which were already poised to make war on the Turks.[53]

Bishop Giacopo da Pesaro was appointed by Alexander VI to the command of the fleet. He was later joined by Admiral Gonsalvo da Cordova and his Spanish fleet of sixty-five sail.[54] The papal fleet, consisting of thirteen galleys and 2,500 men, was also ready to sail. The confidence of the pope had been greatly revived by the naval successes of Gonsalvo and Pesaro during the winter of 1501-1502. The sultan, however, whose fleet had been driven back and who had suffered several grievous losses on the Hungarian frontier, manifested his desire to make peace with the Venetian Republic. His subjects were wishing the war to end, deprived as they were of many necessities of life, in consequence of the interruption of commerce and navigation.[55]

The Venetians were also tired of war, their finances having been almost exhausted. In 1502, with the help of the pope and the Rhodesian knights, Venice had regained the small island of Santa Maura, but soon after began secret negotiations with Bayezid II to stop all further aggressions and procure a general agreement of peace.[56] Not long after, rumors of a treaty of peace began to circulate in Rome and the Vatican itself. According to the dispatches of the Venetian ambassador, Antonio Giustiniani, Venice wished to keep the

pope in the dark about these peace negotiations, thereby deceiving its closest ally and violating its contract of alliance to its own advantage.[57]

As early as June 4, 1502, the pope informed the Venetian ambassador that from many reports he had learned that the doge was holding secret meetings with the sultan, and that many were willing to affirm that an accord had already been reached.[58] Ambassador Giustiniani did his best to assure the pope that peace was neither made nor to be made, and continued to denounce the Turks as the vilest enemy of all Christian peoples.[59] In a dispatch dated June 21, 1502, Giustiniani reports that, notwithstanding his repeated denials, the pope continued to suspect that Venice was willing to make peace with the Ottoman Empire.[60] In July, an agent of Emperor Maximilian informed the doge of Venice that, according to the opinion of everyone, peace had been declared between Venice and Constantinople, since they were becoming neglectful of their naval interests and intercepting all letters coming to Europe from the East.[61]

On the July 17, the pope openly expressed his opinion that the Turks would undertake no further incursions that year, and reiterated that he and the Sacred College had concluded that Venice had come to an agreement with the Grand Turk, Bayezid II.[62] The pope continued to complain, in and

out of the consistory, of the Venetian's treacherous abandonment of the crusade against the Turkish "infidels."[63] On October 27, the pontiff said to the Venetian envoy: "Upon your honor, tell me whether it is true that your Seigniory has made peace with the Turks." Giustiniani answered, "No," and the pope replied, "Yet everyone is assured of it."[64]

Finally, on December 4, 1502, Pope Alexander VI declared that at last he had learned from a letter of his legate that peace had been concluded with the Turks by the Republic of Venice and the king of Hungary, on the condition that all Christians were included.[65] He went on to add, however, that it would have been better to remain united and fight the Turks. Giustiniani continued to deny the peace until four days later, December 8.[66]

On December 14, 1502, a temporary agreement was arrived at in Constantinople, which paved the way for a more formal agreement of peace which was announced by the Venetians on May 20, 1503.[67] Without the support of Venice, Hungary was far too weak to face the Turks alone. Therefore, we cannot be surprised at finding King Ladislas also laying down his arms.[68] On August 20, 1503, just two days after the death of Pope Alexander VI, the king of Hungary concluded a truce with the Ottomans which would last for seven years.[69] The conditions of the December 14 agreement were accepted under

oath by the doge of Venice on the 20th of May, and, finally, confirmed and ratified by the sultan on October 6, 1503.

The articles of the treaty were as follows: The Turks were to retain all conquests made by them and Santa Maura should be restored to them. Bayezid II should return to the merchants of Venice whatever he had taken from them at the beginning of the war. The Venetians should be allowed to navigate the Black Sea, as they had done in the past, and trade along its coast; and to keep, as before, their own consul in Constantinople to judge and decide all controversies among Venetian subjects. There were two additional articles: Venice should keep the island of Zante, but pay the sultan an annual tribute of 500 ducats; and all parties should make efforts to curb piracy.[70] This treaty was duly observed by all concerned parties for several years to follow.

As has been shown, there is ample evidence to show that Pope Alexander VI was genuinely concerned with the threats and incursions of the Ottoman Empire and was committed to the preservation of European unity and cooperation. He was also determined to regain lands once held by Christians and presently held under Moslem control.[71] It is also true that his efforts to unite the European princes against Turkish aggression were undermined by his reputation, deserved or not, as a man who would use his position as supreme pontiff to

advance his own interests and those of his family. This general mistrust of his intentions, along with the apathy toward the preservation of Christianity from Turkish influences, led to his ultimate goal of crushing the Ottoman Empire to remain unfulfilled.

The year 1497 proved to be a very difficult one for Alexander VI. There was an ever-looming threat of another French invasion, and the Holy League was beginning to unravel. In addition, the pope was constantly preoccupied with rebellions from the Roman barons, especially the powerful Orsini family, who were undermining his temporal authority within the Papal States at every turn. Most significantly, Alexander VI was destined to suffer the loss of his son, the duke of Gandia, at the hands of assassins. The cruel murder of the young duke plunged the pope into the deepest depression of his life.[1]

Even the harshest critics of Alexander's pontificate had to concede his almost obsessive devotion and affection for family, especially his four children by Lady Vanozza de Cataneis. As the eldest sibling, Giovanni de Borgia, second duke of Gandia, was heavily favored by Alexander VI, who showered him with titles, benefices and honors of all kinds. Ferrera claims that such devotion was extended to his other children, Cesare, Lucretia, and Gofredo, as well. The same went for more distant relations like his nephew Juan Borgia, cardinal of Monreale, cousin Adriana del Mila, and Lucretia's last husband, Alfonso d'Este, duke of Ferrera.[2] Gregorovius, on the other hand, is sure that such unusual devotion to Giovanni by Alexander alienated and enraged Cesare de Borgia

to the point of fratricide.[3] Most historians, as we shall see, have contradicted Gregorovius' conclusion regarding Cesare's culpability in his own brother's murder.

What is clear, however, is that the senseless murder of the duke, one of the most attractive and promising young noblemen in all Europe, completely crushed the spirit of his father, who, at this time, was at the very pinnacle of power and influence. Cesare de Borgia, who was soon to free himself of all ecclesiastical duties, was now beginning to take a more prominent role in political and military affairs in Italy; the pope was to fall more and more under his influence and control.[4]

Back in 1494 the pope first invited Giovanni de Borgia, duke of Gandia, then in Spain, to come to Rome and accept the position of captain general of the pontifical army. At that time Alexander VI was aware of the preparations being made in France to invade Naples and was in need of faithful soldiers to protect the newly acquired interests of the Borgia family in the threatened kingdom.[5] Having little confidence in the fidelity of his own noblemen in Italy, the pope was anxious to bring his Spanish son into a position of prominence at the Roman court. As a resident of Spain and vassal of King Ferdinand II of Aragon, Giovanni de Borgia was obliged to ask for permission to leave his duchy at Gandia.[6] Two years

later, on August 10, 1496, after having been granted permission to leave Spain, the duke of Gandia made his triumphant entry into Rome; where he was received by his brother Cesare, then cardinal of Valencia, and the whole papal court.[7]

One month later, Gandia was named captain general of the whole army of the Roman Church. The official record states that on October 26, 1496, in St. Peter's Basilica, the pope, accompanied by many cardinals, bishops and prelates, administered the customary oath of office of captain general of the papal army to the illustrious lord, Giovanni de Borgia, duke of Gandia and Suessa, prince of Theano and count of Celino.[8]

The following day the duke left the city, now in command of the papal troops, to commence war on the Orsini family, Rome's most powerful barons. According to De Roo, the Orsini had been recruiting soldiers in Rome to fight for the pope's enemy, Charles VIII of France and against his ally, the king of Naples. Because of this and other acts of defiance to his authority, Alexander VI had the entire family excommunicated and their territories confiscated.[9] The Italian confederates of the Holy League dispatched their condottiere, Guidobaldo di Montefeltro, duke of Urbino, to assist Gandia in bringing down these rebellious vassals of the

Church.[10]

Following a series of frustrating and costly standoffs, the papal troops engaged the forces of the Orsini in a fierce battle somewhere between the cities of Bassano and Soriano on January 24, 1497.[11] One of Gandia's captains ordered the pontifical army to divide itself on the field of battle; the opposing forces took advantage of this tactical error and quickly won the day. Between the slain and captured, the dukes of Urbino and Gandia lost five hundred men, as well as all their cannon and ammunition.[12] The Orsini, being bereft of money and powerful allies in Italy, decided to make peaceful overtures rather than following up their military success at Soriano. The peace treaty, concluded by Alexander VI and the Sacred College on Sunday, February 5, 1497, was ratified by the Orsini on the following Tuesday.[13]

Pastor views the defeat at Soriano as an example of Gandia's incompetence as a commander on the field.[14] De Roo, on the other hand, claims that Gandia's personal courage on the battlefield, and willingness to contribute his own resources towards paying the expenditures of the war, proved him worthy of the pope's confidence and gratitude.[15] On February 21, the duke, determined to redeem his reputation as a military commander, set off for the city of Ostia, which was held by a garrison of French troops. The expedition was

successful, and the duke of Gandia, as the liberator of Ostia, was able to return triumphantly to Rome.[16]

The pope, now assured of his son's military qualities as captain general of his army, was disposed to reward him with territories formerly belonging to Naples.[17] On June 7, a secret consistory was held, in which the duchy of Benevento and the cities of Terracina and Pontecorco were granted to the duke of Gandia and his legitimate male descendants. Pastor reports that out of the twenty-seven cardinals present, Francesco Piccolomini (the future Pope Pius III) was the only one who objected to the alienation of these Church lands. He goes on to add that the ambassador of Ferdinand and Isabella had also endeavored to prevent it, on the grounds that it as a case of blatant nepotism at the expense of the Church and Christendom.[18]

Giovanni de Borgia, duke of Gandia, did not live long enough to receive any of the new benefices granted by his grateful father. The tragic account of the duke's assassination has come down to us through the meticulous, if not entirely accurate, diaries of Johann Burchard. According to his account, On Wednesday, June 14, 1497, Cesare de Borgia, cardinal of Valencia, and Giovanni de Borgia, duke of Gandia, two favorite sons of the pope,[19] dined at the house of Lady Vanozza, their mother, who lived in the neighborhood of the

Church of St. Peter in Chains.[20] According to a letter by Cardinal Ascanio Sforza to his brother, the duke of Milan, the pope's nephew Juan, cardinal of Monreale, was also a member of the dinner party.[21]

The reason for this small celebration was the journey to Naples Cesare was to make a few days later as legate for the coronation of the new king, Federigo of Aragon.[22] After the meal, as night was approaching, Cesare and his brother mounted two mules on their way back home to the apostolic palace. They rode together, along with a few attendants, until they approached the palace of the vice-chancellor, Ascanio Sforza, now known as the Sforza-Cesarini palace, which had formerly belonged to their father.[23] At this point the duke declared that he would like to find entertainment somewhere and took leave of his brother, Cesare.[24] Chamberlain, in his account of the murder, claims that the duke was headed for an assignation with a certain Lady Damiata; this is why his household was not troubled by his absence the following day.[25]

The duke made his way to the Square of the Jews accompanied by only one groom and a mysterious masked man, whom he had brought to the feast, and who had visited him at the apostolic palace almost every day for a month.[26] Having arrived at the square, the duke ordered his groom to remain behind until eight o'clock and, should he fail to return, the

servant was to proceed directly to the apostolic palace. After having given these orders, the duke and his masked companion rode away from the servant to parts unknown.[27] This is the last time the duke of Gandia was seen alive.

When the duke failed to return to the apostolic palace the following morning, Cesare notified the pontiff of his unplanned departure in the evening and of his expected return later that day.[28] The pope was greatly disturbed at the news, but he persuaded himself that the duke, indulging his passion with a girl somewhere, was embarrassed for that reason at leaving her house in broad daylight. Burchard reported that when the duke failed to resurface that evening, the pope commenced to make every effort to enquire from everyone concerned the cause of his absence.[29]

Among those who were questioned was a Slavonian dealer in wood named Giorgio Schiavone, who was unloading his vessel on the banks of the Tiber the night of the duke's disappearance. What follows is Schiavone's account of what he saw that night, according to Burchard's diary:

> The question was put to him whether he had seen anything thrown into the river during the middle of the night just past, to which he made answer that about two o'clock in the morning two men came out of a lane by the hospital onto the public road along the river. They looked about cautiously to see whether anyone was passing, and when they did not see anybody they disappeared again in the lane. After a little while two

> others came out of the lane, looked about in the same way and made a sign to their companions when they discovered nobody around. Thereupon a rider appeared on a white horse who had a corpse behind him with the head and arms hanging down by one side and the legs on the other, and supported on both sides by the two men who had first appeared. The procession advanced to the place where the refuse is thrown into the river. At the bank they came to a halt and turned the horse with its tail to the river. Then they lifted the corpse, one holding it by its hands and arms, the other by the legs and feet, dragged it down from the horse and cast it with all their strength into the river.[30]

When asked by some of servants of the pope why he failed to lodge a criminal report with the governor of the city, Schiavone answered that in the past he had seen hundreds of different corpses being thrown into the Tiber without anyone making much of a fuss about it.[31] In fact, Rome was notorious for its criminal activity and most people knew better than to wander about its narrow, darkened streets alone in the middle of the night.

Schiavone's testimony caused the Tiber to be dragged by fishermen and boatmen from all over Rome with the assurance of a large reward for the discovery of the duke.[32] His body was found on the night of June 16, not far from the church of Santa Maria del Popolo, and close to a garden belonging to the estate of Cardinal Ascanio Sforza.[33] He had nine wounds, one in the neck piercing his throat, the other eight in his head, torso and legs. The duke's purse, containing thirty ducats,

and rich garments remained untouched by the assassins.[34] Robbery, therefore, was immediately dismissed as a motive.

When the pope was informed that the duke had been murdered and his body thrown into the Tiber like so much refuse, he was overcome by grief. According to Burchard, he locked himself in his private chamber, weeping bitterly for hours and refusing all food and drink for several days.[35] The corpse of the duke of Gandia was brought by his noble retainers from the castle of Sant'Angelo to the church of Santa Maria del Popolo, preceded by dozens of torchbearers and all the prelates of the palace. Burchard noted that loud lamentations and weeping followed the final procession. The corpse was laid to rest, following much pomp and ceremony, in a vault of the aforementioned church.[36] According to contemporary accounts, the pope was too distraught to attend any of his son's burial ceremonies.[37]

In Rome all sorts of wild rumors regarding the duke's gruesome assassination were being bruited about, causing the pope even more distress and anxiety. The complete failure of the papal police to discover anything of substance left a free field for the invention of all sorts of unlikely scenarios. Suspicion fell first upon the Orsini and on Cardinal Sforza, who had had a violent quarrel with the duke shortly before the latter's disappearance.[38]

The list of possible suspects began to grow with the ever-widening circulation of rumors and accusations. Giovanni Sforza, the husband of Lucretia, whose marriage was crumbling under the suspicion of his alleged impotence, was near the top of the list of possible suspects. The duke of Urbino, who was left behind by the Duke of Gandia to be captured by the Orsini at the battle of Soriano and forced to pay his own ransom, was also under suspicion. Finally, there was the duke della Mirandola, whose daughter had become the unwilling object of Gandia's attentions. Cesare, at least during the initial stages of the investigation, was never mentioned as a suspect.[39]

On Monday, June 19, Pope Alexander VI held an important consistory at which all the cardinals in Rome were present, with the exception of Cardinal Sforza, who was fearful or retribution from the Spaniards in the city.[40] The pope specifically exculpated those upon whom suspicion had immediately fallen, including his son-in-law, Giovanni Sforza (he was nowhere near Rome at the time of Gandia's murder), the duke della Mirandola and the duke of Urbino.[41] Regarding Ascanio Sforza, the pope replied, "God forbid that I should harbour any such horrible suspicions of the cardinal. I have always looked upon him as a brother and he will be welcome whenever he comes."[41] The gossip in Rome was so pervasive

that the pope was also compelled to clear the duke's youngest brother, Gofredo, who was only fifteen years of age at the time.[42]

Pastor points to the notable omission of the Orsini family in Alexander's exculpations as definitive proof that the pontiff believed them to be the guilty party.[43] In addition, he asserts that the Orsini, who were then seeking refuge in Venice, were the ones who originated the rumors of Cesare's culpability in his own brother's murder.[44] The belief that Cesare was guilty of fratricide was supported by many contemporary historians, including Francesco Guicciardini,[45] and eventually accepted as fact.[46]

There does not seem to be sufficient reason, however, for Cesare to want his own brother dead, at least at this particular point in his career. Cesare de Borgia has often been accused of wanting to escape from his ecclesiastical duties by eliminating his brother, the captain general of the pontifical army, and inheriting his military post. Another supposed motive was Cesare's desire to succeed his brother as the third duke of Gandia, and thereby possess his vast estates in Spain and Naples.[47] All of Rome knew, as did Cesare, that Giovanni de Borgia's titles and estates would naturally be passed on to his son, born three years earlier.[48] In addition, Cesare was not appointed to the captaincy of the

papal army until 1500, three years after the death of Gandia.

If Alexander VI had had even the least suspicion the Cesare was responsible for his beloved son's murder, he would not have appointed him as the guardian and keeper of his brother's property in Rome. In fact, Lady Maria Enriquez, the duke's widow, remained on good terms with Cesare; at least there is no evidence of any discord between them. Giovanni de Borgia's only son eventually inherited the duchy of Gandia and married a niece of King Ferdinand II of Spain.[49]

The murder of the Giovanni de Borgia, Duke of Gandia, remained unsolved. The mysterious masked man who accompanied the duke on his final journey down those dark Roman streets was never seen or heard from again. What about the eyewitness testimony of Giorgio Schiavone who saw a man on a white horse dumping the duke's corpse into the Tiber? His identity was never revealed, even though many in Rome believed Cesare to be the mysterious rider.[50]

The senseless murder of his cherished son had a profound impact on Alexander VI's life. It afforded him an opportunity to open his eyes, if briefly, to what the papacy had become. In the first moments of anguish, he seriously and earnestly resolved to take measures for the reformation of the Church; Pastor called it "the turning point of his career."[51] There is no doubt that his pontificate had been transformed into a

secular office. There was more concern shown for the preservation of the Pontifical States from foreign and internal threats than there was for the spiritual well-being of his Christian flock.

On June 19, 1497, he appointed a commission of six cardinals to initiate his measures of reform.[52] Such reforms, however, would have to be carried out step by step, beginning with the pope himself, and carried through to the college of cardinals, bishops, priests, monks and the laity. The bull of reform which was eventually drafted by the pope's commission contained various ordinances relating to the pope himself and his court. A special section was directed against the alienation of any portion of the states of the Church. The pope was expressly forbidden to "give away" any Church territories under the title of a vicariate.[53] The bull also included provisions to reform the Sacred College by forbidding any one cardinal from possessing more than one bishopric or drawing an annual revenue from benefices exceeding 6000 ducats.[54] The sale of offices was to be done away with.

Unfortunately, the bull that was supposed to redeem the pontificate of Alexander VI never went beyond the draft stage. According to Pastor, Alexander "did not possess the moral strength to give up his licentious habits." He goes on to state that "the old spirit of nepotism gradually revived and

grew stronger than ever, and all desire for better things was stifled by the demon of sensuality."[55] It was clear that, despite good intentions brought about by a sincere effort to *reform abuses within the Church, Alexander VI did not possess* the character or determination needed to implement radical and long-lasting reforms. The neglect of the state of Christianity by Alexander VI and other Renaissance popes gave rise to the sense of alienation which led to the Reformation.

Charles VIII's assault on Italy served as a great lesson to Alexander VI from all points of view. The pope learned that to preserve his authority as supreme sovereign he must bring all vassals and vicars of the Church under his control. The territories of the Holy See were without defense and at the mercy of the first comer, since those whose duty was to defend it would deliver themselves to the invader for money or favors. During the French invasion some of the most prominent baronial families of Italy, especially the Colonna, Orsini, Sforza and Savelli, readily declared themselves as enemies of the Holy See and the pope himself.[1] In fact, most opened their doors and lent active assistance to these invaders.

The Republic of Florence proved to be a major stumbling block in the pope's efforts to ensure that the Italian peninsula would remain free from foreign incursions. The importance of separating Florence from French influence was critical to the pontiff, because Tuscany with its mountains and strongholds could defend the papal states against any invasion from the north.[2] The Florentines' stubborn refusal to sever their alliance with France caused the pope to consider a restoration of the Medici family. These projects were the cause of much of the conflict between the pope and the Florentine Dominican preacher, Girolamo Savonarola.

Had Fra Girolamo confined himself to subjects proper to

his vocation as preacher and a religious, he would probably not have come into direct conflict with the pontiff. The central theme of his many sermons in Florence dealt with the absolute necessity of a complete reformation of Rome, the pope, and his court.[3] Savonarola's passionate zeal to reform the Church at its highest levels, not to mention his belief that Charles VIII was a new redeemer, eventually led him to mix religious issues with exclusively political ones. This would prove to be his undoing.[4]

Savonarola's increasing popularity with the throngs of believers who attended his sermons threatened to transform the simple friar into the unofficial "King of Florence," replacing the exiled House of Medici. The ever-growing number of Savonarola followers formed a party called the Arrabiati (the angry ones), while his opponents, who favored the return of Piero de' Medici, were known as the Piagnoni (mourners of the old regime).[5] The Arrabiati continued to call for a return of the French to Italy and repeatedly threatened the pope with the formation of a general council to depose him. Encouraged by such enthusiastic support, Savonarola felt confident in his determination to wage a general war against all the forms of corruption which plagued his Church.[6] In his visionary moments, he prophesied that Charles VIII would return to Italy and destroy the city of Rome, brick by brick.[7]

Alexander VI, no longer able to ignore Savonarola's increasingly violent assaults, began to dispatch a series of briefs designed to temper the passions of the Dominican. The first of these, dated July 25, 1495, extended a "friendly" invitation for Savonarola to come to Rome and explain his prophecies, which the friar claimed to be divinely inspired.[8] Savonarola excused himself from coming to Rome and continued in his campaign to discredit the Holy See. The pope continued to be patient, keeping in mind the friar's popularity with an overwhelming majority of Florence's populace. In September, the pope sent another brief; this time he demanded that Savonarola abstain from preaching of any kind. He was also prohibited from making predictions of future events (especially the downfall of the pope himself), which he claimed came directly from the mouth of God.[9] Even Pastor asserts that the pope was clearly acting within his canonical rights in this regard.[10] After all, even if the pope's motives were primarily political ones, as a priest and friar, Savonarola had sworn obedience to the supreme head of the Church.

Savonarola ignored the pope's prohibitions and continued to preach from the convent of San Marco. Fearing an immanent return of Piero de' Medici, the friar called for the death of all who attempted to bring back the hated Medici to

Florence.[11] By 1496, his venomous attacks were focusing, more and more, not just on Florentine vices but on Rome itself. "Flee from Rome," he preached, "for Babylon signifies confusion, and Rome hath confused all the Scriptures, confused all vices together, confused everything."[12] Politically, Savonarola's constant pleas for a renewed French alliance in Florence threatened Alexander VI with another invasion by the French king. In addition, Charles VIII's continued support for a general council could have lead to his deposition or even another schism. On March 13, 1497, during an audience with the Florentine ambassador, the pope insisted on a renunciation of the French alliance. "Keep to us," he exclaimed, "be loyal Italians and leave the French in France! I must have no more fine words, but some binding security that you will do this."[13] At this point, however, the Florentines were unwilling to break away from France.

By 1497, the language of the Dominican friar became even more violent.

> The Lord saith, I gave thee beautiful vestments, but thou hast made idols of them. Thou hast dedicated the sacred vessels to vain glory, the sacraments to simony; thou hast become a shameless harlot in thy lusts; thou art lower than a beast, thou art a monster of abomination. Once, thou felt shame for thy sin, but now thou art shameless. Once, anointed priests called their sons nephews, but now they speak no more of their nephews, but always and everywhere of their sons.[14]

Alexander VI was now the subject of the friar's attacks. Even though Savonarola refrains from referring to the pope by name, his reference to "priests calling their sons as nephews" was directed squarely at Alexander VI's much-rumored paternity. His language had now served to alienate many of his more prominent supporters. Even Cardinal Caraffa, the head of the Dominican Order and long-time supporter, ceased to defend him.[15] The pope complained bitterly that no one would even speak of the Turks as this man spoke about Rome. Sultan Bayezid II, it is said, was so amused by the friar's slanderous comparisons of himself with the pope that he had his sermons translated into Turkish.[16] Meanwhile, the increasing tensions between the Arrabiati and Piagnoni parties led to a virtual division of the Florentine Republic.

On May 12, 1497, finally attached his name to a brief of excommunication. Savonarola biographer, Pasquale Villari, claims that before this decision was reached, the pope offered to bribe the friar by extending to him a cardinal's hat.[17] It is inconceivable that Alexander VI would be naive enough to believe that an elevation to the purple would be enough to placate this fanatic. If anything, it would only serve to provide him with an additional excuse to accuse the pontiff of simony. Excommunication, even at the height of the Renaissance and issued by a pope obsessed by worldly concerns,

was an extremely serious matter. It was plain to everyone that Savonarola, a Dominican priest, was now cut off from the society which held the key to the kingdom of heaven; in other words, Fra Girolamo was now cut off from God. Whatever the pope's political motivation may have been, Savonarola's persistent insubordination was the main determining factor in his excommunication.[18]

Less than a month after the brief was issued, the pope suffered the personal tragedy of his son's murder. As we have seen, Gandia's sudden murder motivated the pope to, at least, make an effort to implement needed reforms in the Church.[19] Many of Savonarola's complaints against Church corruption were completely justified, as Alexander's short-lived program of reform clearly shows.

Savonarola's excommunication from the Church of Rome only served to fuel his defiant stance. On June 19, 1497, he wrote:

> This excommunication is invalid before God and man, inasmuch as it is based on false reasons and accusations devised by our enemies. I have always submitted, and will still submit, to the authority of the Church; but no one is bound to submit to commands opposed by God, since in such a case our superiors are no longer the representatives of the Lord.[20]

On Christmas day, 1497, Savonarola celebrated three masses at his convent church of San Marco and gave communion to his fellow friars and a large number of the laity. The

excommunication, he argued, was unjust and had no power to bind him from his priestly duties. He then led a solemn procession around the Piazza.[21] Savonarola's convictions were derived from his "prophetic visions," which he used to justify his attacks on the Italian, and especially Roman clergy.

At this time, Florence persisted in its support of Fra Girolamo, despite the insistence of the pope that he be turned over to the Holy See for judgement.[22] On March 7, 1498, the pope, well aware of the fact that Savonarola was still being allowed to preach from the pulpits of San Marco and the Duomo, wrote a letter to the Florentine envoy admonishing him to put an end to the friar's blatant defiance. To make his point clearer, he threatened to place all of Florence under a papal interdict.[23] Such an imposition would effectively isolate the city from its neighbors, with disastrous effects on its trade.[24] This threat did not put an end to the wrath of Fra Girolamo. He urged that a council should be held to depose Alexander VI as "guilty of simony, a heretic, and an unbeliever." Charles VIII had already expressed an interest in holding such a council from the Sorbonne, in Paris.[25]

The people of Florence soon realized that the immediate result of Savonarola's preaching would be their complete isolation from their Italian neighbors; there was also the possibility that a new religious sect would soon emerge,

separate from Rome, and based solely on the prophecies of Fra Girolamo. By now, the numerous enemies of the Arrabiati party were demanding that they prove the divine origins of Savonarola's prophecies by submitting to the ordeal by fire.[26] It was not surprising, therefore, that on March 25, 1498, Fra Domenico da Pescia, one of Savonarola's most zealous disciples, agreed to take up their challenge and submit to the ordeal, along with his master.[27] Pastor insists that Fra Girolamo, unlike his devoted followers, showed no great inclination to submit to the ordeal.[28] Savonarola's enemies were sure that the ordeal would lead to his doom; if the friar entered the fire, he would be burned alive; if he did not, he would forfeit the faith of his adherents.

The day fixed for the ordeal of fire was April 7, 1498. Savonarola's ultimate refusal to undergo the challenge in person was a source of great embarrassment among his followers.[29] Francesco de Puglia, one of the Arrabiati's Franciscan opponents, announced that if Fra Domenico (who had now agreed to submit himself in his master's place) were to perish in the fire, Savonarola would be banished from Florence.[30] On the day of the ordeal, The Domenican friars of San Marco, led by Fra Girolamo, met their Franciscan opponents at the Piazza of the Signiory. The ordeal was a fiasco. Fra Domenico insisted on entering the flames while carrying the

sacred host. The Franciscans, outraged by such an insult to the blessed sacrament, refused to allow it.[31] Fearing a riot, both parties decided to disperse from the Piazza.

The conduct of Savonarola and his followers was condemned throughout the city. It was perceived that the friar's failure to undergo the ordeal was a clear indication that his claims of a divinely inspired mission to reform the Church was a complete fraud. The convent of San Marco was stormed by outraged crowds and many of his followers were murdered.[32] Savonarola was compelled to present himself before the authorities of Florence. Alexander VI, relieved that Savonarola had finally been discredited, desired that meddlesome friar be brought to Rome to be judged for his crimes against the Church.[33] The Florentines, however, insisted that the Dominican and his followers be prosecuted in the city where the crimes had been committed. The pope eventually consented to this condition, but sent two of his papal delegates to assist in the trial.[34]

The papal commissaries appointed for the ungracious task of examining a man already enfeebled by hours of torture and imprisonment were Francesco Romolino, a Spanish cleric from Ilerda, and Fra Gioacchino Torriano, general of the Dominican Order.[35] According to Lucas, Romolino treated the entire affair with an air of shameless levity, making it understood

that the result of the trial was a foregone conclusion. "We shall have a bonfire," he is reported to have said, "for I have the sentence of condemnation in my pocket."[36] After being submitted to more torture, Savonarola finally "confessed" that he was not a prophet divinely inspired by God. Seemingly abandoned by their master, the friars of San Marco submitted a humble letter of apology to Alexander VI.[37]

On May 28, 1498, after being officially degraded, Fra Girolamo Savonarola was hanged in the Piazza and his body burned. The ashes were thrown into the Arno so as to leave no relics of the preacher for his followers to venerate.[38] Guicciardini wrote that in his final moments Savonarola did not express any word that might have indicated either his guilt or innocence.[39] Yet as Lucas makes it clear, the three essential counts on which Savonarola was condemned, "constructive heresy, schism and contempt of the Holy See," were amply proven.[40]

The pope had the power to spare the life of Savonarola. In fact, he was more than willing to grant him absolution. But as the titular head of the Roman Church, he was obliged to punish those who continually flaunted their contempt for the Church and its institutions. There was no tolerance for dissension in this period of history. Renaissance popes served the dual functions of spiritual leaders and secular

princes. Alexander VI was offended by the friar's legitimate charges of papal corruption, but he was also concerned with his alliances with foreign powers who would threaten his authority as the temporal sovereign of the papal states. Savonarola's mingling in politics was the ultimate source of his downfall. The Florentine state, no longer an important power, failed to regain the vitality and gaiety of the golden age it had enjoyed during the last years of Lorenzo the Magnificent.[41]

The ancient custom of celebrating a jubilee every hundred years was established by Pope Boniface VIII in 1300.[1] It afforded sinners throughout Christendom the opportunity to cleanse their souls by making a pilgrimage to Rome. On March 28, 1499, Alexander VI continued this tradition by pronouncing 1500 a year of jubilee.[2] After having received the sacrament of penance, pilgrims would be granted absolution of all sins and remission of all temporal punishment. In addition, all penitents were obliged to make daily visits to the main altar of the basilicas of St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John Lateran and of Santa Maria Maggiore, for thirty days if they were citizens of Rome and for fifteen days if strangers.[3]

Pope Clement VI had decided to reduce the intervening years of the jubilee from one hundred to fifty years. Pope Urban VI, in consideration of the brevity of human life, further accelerated the recurrence of the jubilee to every thirty-third year. Finally, Pope Paul II further reduced the intervening space of time to twenty-five years (the last celebration having taken place in 1475).[4] Alexander VI was enthusiastic in making preparations for the great event. On December 22, 1499, the jubilee bull was published in Latin and Italian, at the sound of trumpets, by chamberlains of the pope. Later that day, the bull was publicly read in Italian by officers of the city. According to custom, the pope

himself would open the golden door of St. Peter's Basilica on Christmas Eve and send cardinals to open those of the basilicas of St. Paul, St. John Lateran and Santa Maria Maggiore.[5]

On that day, Alexander VI came down from the Vatican, carried in his sedan and holding a lighted candle in his left hand, while blessing the people with his right. Upon his arrival to St. Peter's, the pope accepted a hammer from the masons and, according to jubilee tradition, struck a breach in one of the basilica's weakened walls; he then returned to his seat, allowing the workmen to complete the work of demolition. Cardinals Costa, Orsini, and the archbishop of Ragusa were delegated to open the golden doors of the other three basilicas in the same manner. Following a solemn mass, the supreme pontiff officially declared the commencement of the jubilee.[6]

According to De Roo, the pope paid close attention to all spiritual matters concerning the jubilee, but the temporal affairs connected to it, especially those concerned with the physical safety of the pilgrims, were foremost on his mind.[7] The journey to Rome was an especially precarious one; pilgrims were often attacked by bands of robbers while making their way to the Eternal City. Burchard relates how a certain Baron Rene d'Agrimont, ambassador to the king of France, was robbed

and wounded by twenty-two highwaymen and brigands in the mountains of Viterbo--territory controlled by the Colonna barons.[8]

As early as November 1498, the pope assembled the cardinals for a special consistory during which they discussed ways of securing the route to the city for the throngs of expected pilgrims. According to a bull published February 25, 1500, the governors of the cities lining the route to Rome were ordered, under pain of excommunication, to restore all goods looted by thieves operating in their territories. As vassals of the Church, these governors were to be held responsible for safeguarding the roads and inns used by pilgrims.[9] Ludovico Sforza, duke of Milan, was not amenable to the temporal power of Alexander VI, nor did his monitory bulls have any impact on the way he ruled over his dominions. During the first few months of the jubilee year, after having regained his territories from King Louis XII, he incited his subjects to rob every Frenchman who passed through his lands, on the way to or from Rome.[10]

In order to secure pilgrims traveling by sea, the pope issued a proclamation ordering, under the most severe penalties, all Corsicans to vacate the pontifical states or forfeit their properties and be imprisoned.[11] These islanders were singled out by the pope, owing to their reputation,

deserved or not, for piracy and other forms of thievery. In fact, Alexander VI went so far as to order a war vessel to cruise the Adriatic coasts of the peninsula in search of pirates ready to rob would-be pilgrims.[12]

Neither the grave risks nor the horrible inconvenience of the voyage prevented the faithful of every rank and distinction from pouring into the Eternal City from the farthest reaches of Europe. Pilgrims thronged to visit the tombs of the apostles so that they might gain the jubilee indulgences granted for such expeditions. According to Burchard, an estimated 100,000 faithful gathered to receive the papal benediction on the Thursday of Holy Week.[13] These numbers were significant since the population of Rome, at this time, numbered around 40,000.

In spite of the spiritual uplift experienced by many of the pilgrims attending the jubilee that year, one could not ignore the grim and often violent realities of daily life in Rome. Its streets were often filled with scenes of brawling and bloodshed. Burchard describes how, in a single day, eighteen men were hanged over the bridge of Sant'Angelo. These convicted criminals were allowed to dangle down from the gallows of the bridge (nine on each side) so that each passing cardinal could view their corpses.[15] The first of these eighteen men was a prominent doctor of medicine attached to

the hospital of St. John Lateran. This demented individual would leave the hospital every morning armed with a crossbow to shoot passers-by; he would then proceed to plunder their dead bodies. Thirteen of the hanged men were among the twenty-two who had robbed Baron d'Agrimont. The remaining four criminals had committed various misdeeds not specified by Burchard.[16]

These and other violent spectacles confronted the pilgrims on a daily basis. Mathew describes how Cesare de Borgia and his sister-in-law, the Princess of Squillace, each took sides in a deadly duel fought between a Frenchman and a Burgundian on Monte Testaccio. On another occasion, Cesare held a bullfight in the piazza of St. Peter's Basilica![17] While mounted on horseback, he slew five bulls with a lance, and beheaded a sixth with one stroke of his sword.[18] All this occurred in the presence of thousands of pilgrims from foreign lands.

Pope Alexander VI made the decision to extend the jubilee to specified cities and countries outside of Rome. Consideration was given to the personal safety of pilgrims making the long and arduous journey to the Eternal City. On May 15, 1500, for example, the jubilee was extended to the kingdoms of Hungary and Poland.[19] On October 5, the pope sent his legate, Cardinal Raymund Perault, to publish the jubilee

in Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Friesland and Prussia.[20] At about the same date, the pope extended the Roman jubilee to the whole of France and Italy.

Plenary indulgences were to be offered to all faithful who would receive the sacrament of penance and make a financial contribution towards the defense of Christianity against The Turks. The pontiff enthusiastically pursued donations for the purpose of mounting crusades against the Turks. The extension of the jubilee to the whole of Christian Europe would make it easier for the Church to raise the money needed to fund crusades. The Church considered such donations to be "voluntary." Alexander VI granted incentives for believers to make financial contributions in exchange for indulgences.[21] In France, for example, those who could not make the journey to Rome could receive plenary indulgences by sending a donation and praying at home for the success of the Christian armies in their struggles against the "infidel" Turks.[22]

All jubilee money collected was to be deposited in the papal treasury and to be spent exclusively for the defense of Christianity against the Turks. Pastor charges that the pope made these funds available to his son, Cesare, who used them to enlarge his army for his conquest of the Romagna.[23] Baron Corvo echoes these sentiments and adds that the duke used

jubilee contributions to acquire several squadrons of French mercenaries.[24] De Roo, pointing to the accounts in papal treasury books, asserts that the sums of money confided to Cesare and the papal army did not increase in the years immediately following the jubilee.[25] Those historians who have accused Alexander VI of mishandling jubilee alms for the purposes of advancing the interests of his own family have offered no documentation to support their claims.

The amount of money actually received by the pope from the jubilee and its extensions has been greatly exaggerated. In Germany, for example, the princes were actively opposed to sending Rome any of the jubilee money collected in their states.[26] In fact, Emperor Maximilian was at first entirely opposed to the publication of the jubilee in his country. When the he finally consented to have the jubilee published in Germany, he insisted that all money collected for the expedition against the Turks be placed in his hands.[27] There is no indication that any jubilee money raised for a crusade against the Turks was ever expended for that purpose. The same could be said for jubilee funds raised in all of the other European states. The enthusiasm for crusades was small and the general mistrust of the papacy was great.

On Sunday, March 29, 1500, Pope Alexander VI officially nominated his son, Cesare de Borgia, duke of Valentino, as captain general of the Holy Roman Church.[1] This occasion was celebrated with great pomp in the papal chambers and was attended by the Sacred College, as well as most of the Borgia family. Burchard describes how the pope placed the crimson biretta, emblazoned with the ensignia of the captain general, on the head of the duke while uttering these words:

> Receive the sign of the dignity of the Gonfaloniere that is being put on your head by us in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and remember that from now on you are pledged to defend the faith and the Church.[2]

The duke then proceeded to the papal throne and placed himself at the right side of his father, the supreme pontiff.[3] This honor followed Cesare's successful campaigns in the cities of Forli and Imoli, which brought down the rebellious Caterina Sforza-Riario, widow of Girolamo Riario, lord of Forli.[4]

His triumphant return to Rome nearly eclipsed the jubilee festivities of that year. As a French and Italian prince, solemnly invested with the temporal powers of the Holy See, Cesare had now outstripped his late brother, the duke of Gandia, in honors.[5] Cesare's vigor contrasted with the aging pontiff's increasing fatigue and frailty. During one jubilee ceremony, the pope was struck by fainting spells, which forced him to sit through the entire mass, too weak even to wear his

miter.[6] Cesare had to deal with the inevitable reality of his father's mortality; he would have to prepare for a future that did not include a Borgia as supreme pontiff.

The duke of Valentino, as an ally of the France, had secured for himself the services of King Louis XII, and since 1499 he had helped in his schemes in the Romagna.[7] He was also confident that Venice would lend its support in his campaigns to secure the papal states. He could not, however, ask for the same guarantees from the Aragonese of Naples and Spain. These two powers had a representative in Rome who was poised--at any moment--to rise up against the duke of Valentino.[8] This man was Alfonso of Aragon, duke of Bisceglie, a natural (illegitimate) son of the king of Naples and second husband of the duke's sister, Lucretia.

In 1493, Lucretia's marriage with, Giovanni Sforza, lord of Pesaro, had been annulled on the grounds of the latter's impotence. All this occurred despite Sforza's strong protestations. The ensuing scandal served only to tarnish her reputation in Rome. The pope, now anxious to solidify a stronger alliance between himself and the Aragonese, arranged to marry his daughter to Alfonso, the seventeen-year-old son of the Neopolitan monarch.[9] The wedding was conducted with great ceremony at the Vatican. Alexander VI bestowed on his daughter a dowry of 40,000 ducats, the duchy of Spoleto and

the territory of Sermoneta.[10] A son was born three months later.[11]

Alfonso and Lucretia had made the fateful decision to settle permanently in Rome, within the shadows of the Vatican, after having been warned not to do so by friends of the young duke.[12] Gregorovius writes that Alfonso followed his wife to Rome "like a lamb to slaughter."[13] To Cesare, his sister's marriage to a Neopolitan prince had become as useless as her union with Sforza of Pesaro. By all accounts, Lucretia seemed to be on excellent terms with her young husband, and their life in Rome seemed to be a happy one, despite Cesare's grumblings.[14]

This happiness, however, was not destined to last long: On Tuesday, July 15, 1500, the duke of Bisceglie was attacked on the steps of St. Peter's Basilica and severely wounded in the head, right arm and leg. The assailants fled down the stairs of the basilica, where about forty men on horseback were waiting for them. They escaped from the city through the Porta Pertusa.[15] Alfonso was residing in the palace of the cardinal of Santa Maria in Portico, but his condition was so desperate that those who found him on the steps of St. Peter's brought him to the Borgia Tower in the Vatican.[16] The account of the duke's assault is taken directly from Burchard's diary, which was written shortly after the events took place.

Gregorovius reports that Lucretia swooned at the sight of her husband covered with blood.[17]

The ailing duke was nursed by Lucretia and his sister, Sancia. The pope, fearing that the assailants might return to finish what they started, ordered guards to be posted by his bedchamber door. In Rome there was endless gossip concerning the identity of those responsible for the vicious assault.[18] The Venetian ambassador, Paolo Capello, who Sabatini describes as an "ineffable gossip-monger" formulated his own theory regarding the culprits' identity.[19] On July 19 he made the following report to the signory of Venice: "It is not known who wounded the duke, but it is said that it was the same person who killed the duke of Gandia and threw him into the Tiber."[20] There is no credible evidence that would link the murder of Gandia with the assault on Alfonso.

According to Burchard's diary, on August 18, 1500, at four o'clock in the afternoon, the Duke of Bisceglie was strangled in his bed. This was done in spite of the presence of the papal guards stationed at his door.[21] The Venetian ambassador, in a report dated the same day, claimed that the duke of Valentino had ordered one of his captains, the notorious Michelotto, to have Bisceglie "cut to pieces."[22] There is no eyewitness evidence that either of these two scenarios actually took place. According to Gregorovius, who

relies on the questionable testimony of Capello, Alfonso, believing Cesare to be his would-be assassin, ordered archers to kill him while he casually strolled underneath one of the bedroom windows at the Vatican palace. Upon realizing that his brother-in-law had tried to murder him, Cesare commanded Michelotto to strangle Alfonso in his own bed.[23] Capello also believed this same Michelotto to be the mysterious masked man who accompanied the unfortunate duke of Gandia the night he was murdered and tossed into the Tiber.[24]

While it is true that Cesare de Borgia had no use for Alfonso of Aragon and was openly opposed to his marriage with Lucretia, he was not the only person in Rome with the means and motive to commit the crime. As Pastor points out, Alfonso was intriguing with the Colonna family against their arch-rivals, the Orsini. It is just as likely that the Orsini, in an effort to foil a possible alliance between the Colonna family and the king of Naples, orchestrated the elimination of the duke of Bisceglie.[25] The physicians of the murdered duke and a hunchback who helped nurse him were eventually arrested and brought to the prison at the castle of Sant'Angelo where an investigation was started against them. They were later found not guilty and set free.[26]

The murder of Alfonso remains unsolved to this day, as does the murder of Gandia. Historians like Ferdinand

Gregorovius remained convinced that Cesare de Borgia was guilty of both murders and that the pope, mainly out of fear, turned a blind eye to his son's vicious crimes against his own family. He also condemns Lucretia for failing to avenge her husband's murder or to flee from the destructive influences of her father and brother.[27] He does make a valid point when he describes Lucretia as a willing pawn; weak, without character and always subject to the will of others.[28]

The same could now be said for the pope as well. Many historians have come to the correct conclusion that the pope was falling under the control of the duke of Valentino. Even if Cesare had openly confessed to the murder of Alfonso and Gandia, there is little chance that the pope would have had the courage to bring him to justice and thereby cause a permanent rift in his own house. Cesare was too powerful and his future too bright for that to happen. Besides, Lucretia would soon be provided with another--even better--husband.

In spite of his great pessimism about the future, the actual political situation in 1503 Europe was favorable to the House of Borgia in the last months of Alexander's life. The pope was in robust health and felt as young as ever;[1] both he and Cesare looked forward to a prolonged pontificate. At this precise moment, the pope was engaged in his favorite ploy of playing off one major European power against the other (in this case, France and Spain) in an attempt to further expand his dominions throughout Italy. The kings of Spain and France both wanted to have the Borgia pope as an ally. The Ferraese envoy reported, on August 10, 1503, that negotiations were ongoing between the pope, the king of Spain and Emperor Maximilian to invest Cesare with Tuscany (including the towns of Siena, Pisa and Lucca) and grant him the title of king.[2] Meanwhile, Cesare continued his campaign to expel the numerous barons and princes of the Pontifical States who dared challenge the supreme authority of the Holy See (as we know, synonymous with the Borgia family). His troops were awaiting him in Perugia, and with Romagna pacified, he had good reason for optimism over the future.[3]

Between January 2 and 3, 1503, the pope was informed of the intended attempt on the life of his captain, Cesare, duke of Valentino and Romagna, by assassins hired by the Orsini.[4] Early the following morning, word was sent out for Cardinal

Gianbattista Orsini to appear at once at the Vatican. No sooner had the old, blind cardinal appeared than he was arrested by the papal police and placed in the castle of Sant'Angelo, where he was attended by his own servants. On that same day, January 3, all the remaining members of the Orsini family were placed under arrest.[5] Most of the prisoners forfeited their personal possessions and remained incarcerated until after the demise of Alexander VI, some being liberated as late as August 20 and 22, 1503.[6]

In prison Cardinal Orsini was treated with the consideration customary for great personages and political prisoners; his family visited him, his food was sent in from outside, he had his own private doctor, and part of the castle was, more or less, at his disposal.[7] Fusero writes that a mysterious, masked woman (presumably an old friend of the cardinal) bribed the pope with a priceless pearl in an effort to ensure good treatment for the prisoner, but he neglects to quote any source which would support this claim.[8] While detained, Cardinal Orsini confessed to taking part in the conspiracy against the life of Cesare de Borgia.[9] On January 23, Antonio Giustiniani, the Venetian ambassador, wrote that the cardinal was in his usual good spirits, but on February 15, he reported that Orsini had become ill and delirious with fever.[10]

On Wednesday, February 22, Cardinal Orsini died in the castle of Sant'Angelo.[11] The report that he was poisoned by the Borgia was widely circulated in Rome.[12] Giustiniani (who, as a diplomat assigned to the papal court, was in a position to know) simply relates that he died from fever and makes no mention of poison.[13] Burchard's only remark pertaining to the circumstances surrounding Cardinal Orsini's death is rather ominous. He writes, "The pope commanded my colleague, Bernardino Gutterii, to arrange the funeral of the deceased. I will not, therefore, attend the ceremony myself nor have anything to do with it, I have no wish to learn aught that does not concern me."[14] This disparaging innuendo has been interpreted as typical of the kinds of rumors being whispered around the Vatican concerning Orsini's "suspicious" demise, but De Roo dismisses it as a sentiment reflecting Burchard's spite at being left out of the cardinal's funeral preparations.[15] Cardinal Gianbattista Orsini was the last casualty of Alexander VI's many feuds with the Roman barons.

On the night of April 11, Giovanni Michele, Cardinal of Preneste, died at his Vatican residence after two days of suffering from violent stomachaches and incessant vomiting.[16] Because of the sudden appearance of this ailment and the nature of the symptoms, many were led to suspect poisoning as the likeliest cause of death.[17] The distribution of this

wealthy Venetian prelate's personal property was placed under the exclusive jurisdiction of the consistory; there is no evidence that the pope or his family ever profited from Michele's unlikely demise.[18] This did not, however, prevent the Borgia's many enemies in Rome from spreading rumors alleging Alexander's complicity in the cardinal's death. Pastor claims that it was more probable that Cesare had Michele poisoned rather than his father, yet he offers no proof to support this opinion.[19]

It is, however, true that Cardinal Michele's confidential assistant, one Asquinio de Colloredo, arrested by Pope Julius II on December 7, 1503, afterwards confessed that he had administered poison to his master on behalf of Alexander VI and Cesare de Borgia, duke of Valentino, receiving 1,000 ducats as a reward.[20] Fusero, however, reminds us that this confession was obtained by means of torture and that Alexander's successor and former rival, Julius II, was determined to create a climate of public opinion hostile to the Borgia name.[21]

The suspicious deaths of cardinals Orsini and Michele were used by the pope's many enemies in Rome to establish the Borgia's now-legendary reputation as "master poisoners." Oddly enough, the Borgia family was often accused of poisoning their friends and allies, as well as their enemies. One must

remember that Orsini and Michele, along with Ascanio Sforza, were among those cardinals who played key roles in assuring the election of Borgia to the Holy See.[22]

According to legend, the Borgias were supposedly responsible for developing their own secret concoction, the deadly cantarella whose base was cantharides, or arsenic.[23] This versatile white powder sometimes had a repellant taste, and at other times, no taste at all. By dissolving small doses in wine, water or soup, an assassin could control--or so the theory goes--how long it would take a victim to die.[24] Therefore, if one is to lend credence to the legend, this would explain why it took Orsini one full week to die and Michele a mere two days. According to their infamous reputation, the Borgia clan did not act from simple sadism but from sordid self-interest.

In the consistory of May 31, the pope named nine new cardinals. Five of these were Spaniards: Giovanni Caselar of Valencia, Francesco Romolino (one of Savonarola's inquisitors), Francesco Sprats, Jacopo Casanova, and Francesco Iloris; three were Italians: Niccolo Fiesco, Count of Lavagna, Francesco Soderini and Adriano da Corneto; one was German: Melchior Copis von Meckau.[25] According to a dispatch by Giustiniani, it was alleged the each new cardinal paid the pope 20,000 ducats for his elevation to the purple, and that

the total collected on this occasion was between 120,000 and 130,000 ducats. He also went on to report that most of these men were considered to be of "doubtful reputation" and that from his observations, the pope's personal income "is just what he chooses it to be."[26] His conclusion that a pope's financial resources depend on his will is overstated. The election of new cardinals usually involved voluntary contributions to the papal treasury, but it is unclear whether this may be cited as an example of simony. Ferrera points out that these moneys were transferred to the common treasury of the Church, and were dispensed to fund the crusades.[27]

August 11, 1503, was the eleventh anniversary of the pope's election. But with the coming and advance of summer his exuberance began to fade, and his mood became strangely morose.[28] At the anniversary celebration, Ambassador Giustiniani was struck by his air of depression in contrast with the gaiety which was habitual to him on all such occasions.[29] One month earlier, Giustiniani reported finding the pope lying on his bed, fully dressed. The pontiff received him cheerfully but told him that for three days he had been bothered by bouts of indigestion.[30] A few days later he complained of an unnatural fatigue.[31] He was evidently under the influence of the heat and contaminated air. Baron Corvo slanders the pope by claiming that he took refuge from

the unbearable heat of that summer in the shady gardens of the Vatican, while watching his young bastard son Giovanni and grandson Camerino at play, nearby.[32]

In 1503, Rome had a summer even hotter than usual. The lack of hygienic provisions in the city and the proximity of the marshes all about gave rise to terrible epidemics.[33] Pastor reports that the heat and drought of August had caused the malaria that year to be worse than usual, claiming many lives.[34] On August 5, Juan Borgia, cardinal of Monreale, died suddenly at the age of fifty. Most envoys mentioned that the sickness was caused by an especially virulent form of Roman fever, which was very speedily fatal.[35] The Venetian envoy, however, ascribed the cardinal's death to poisoning by Cesare.[36] While watching Cardinal Borgia's funeral procession pass beneath his balcony, Alexander VI, who like his nephew,] had grown very corpulent, observed, "This month is a bad one for fat people."[37]

On the same day that marked the death of Cardinal Juan Borgia, the pope and his son, Cesare, were invited to dine at the country villa of Adriano da Corneto, cardinal of Castellesi, who was one of the nine men elected to the college in the May consistory. Seeking some badly needed mental and bodily refreshment, the pope and his son readily accepted the invitation. The dinner, which took place "al fresco" in the

cardinal's vineyard, lasted well into the night. All those attending were exposed to the evening breezes that were especially noxious, and the effect of which was felt by all, as Giustiniani reported.[38] At first the pontiff did not complain of any bodily ailment, but five days later, on August 10, he summoned his ordinary physician, Bernardo Buongiovanni, Bishop of Venosa, who was himself unwell, and another doctor, Scipio, from the outskirts of Rome.[39] He was found to have a slight fever, but the physicians assured the pontiff that there was no cause for alarm.[40]

On the morning of August 12, the pope fell ill. That evening he had a spell of vomiting, and at vesper time, between six and seven o'clock, a strong fever appeared and remained.[41] Giustiniani noted that Cesare had also fallen ill, and that the cause of sickness for both was the supper that they had taken one week before at Cardinal Corneto's villa.[42]

On August 13, early in the morning, the pope was bled to weaken his fever. Burchard asserted that thirteen ounces of blood were extracted from his vein.[43] Giustiniani mentions only ten, which he considered extreme when taking into account his advanced age.[44] Later that day, his condition improved, somewhat, and he felt well enough to allow some cardinals to play cards in his presence for a few hours.[45] The strictest

air of secrecy was observed at the Vatican; no physicians, attendants or barbers were allowed to leave the palace. Information concerning the pope's condition was able to reach only Burchard or Giustiniani.[46]

On Thursday, August 17, medicines were administered early in the morning, but they did not slow the progression of the fever.[47] Cardinal Caraffa told the Venetian ambassador that all hopes for recovery hinged on the beneficial effects of the medicines administered that day.[48]

On Friday the 18th, between nine and ten o'clock in the morning, the pope made his last confession to his vicar general, Pietro Gamboa, bishop of Carignola, who then conducted a mass in the sickroom. After communion the bishop gave the eucharist to the pope, who was sitting up in his bed.[49] Around noon, the pope's condition worsened, and at vesper time the bishop of Carignola administered the sacrament of extreme unction. He then began to grow weaker and towards the the evening hours of August 18, 1503, Alexander VI breathed his last.[50]

Of those present at the pope's death, four were cardinals of the palace: Jacopo Serra, Francesco Borgia, Jacopo Casanova and Francesco Iloris. All were Spaniards. Burchard's diary mistakenly listed Juan Borgia, who we know died two weeks earlier, as one of the cardinals present in the sickroom.[51]

He also claimed that the pope never once mentioned the names of Cesare or Lucretia.[52] The cause of death was the overheated and corrupt air, which generated a malignant and epidemic fever. This fever, or malaria, took the lives of many other Romans that summer. Giustiniani described it in several dispatches; yet in his second letter of August 18, 1503, he reported the opinion of the physician, Scipio, who thought that the illness had been brought on by apoplexy.[53]

The following morning, The corpse of Alexander VI was carried to St. Peter's Basilica, where it was to remain, uncovered, nearly the whole day to receive the respect and homage of the Roman people.[54] The pope was a man of considerable corpulence, and the city was in the grip of a suffocating heat. The natural consequences of these two circumstances was the fermentation and rapid decomposition of the corpse.[55] This is what Burchard saw when he, as the pope's official master of ceremonies, ventured into St. Peter's to oversee the vigil:

> The decomposition and blackness of his face increased constantly so that at eight o'clock, when I saw him, he looked like the blackest cloth or the darkest negro, completely spotted, the nose swollen, the mouth large, the tongue swollen up, doubled so that it started out of his lips, in short so horrible that no one ever saw anything similar or declared to know of it.[56]

The ugliness of the corpse called forth the idea of

poison in the minds of many common people, who did not comprehend its obvious causes.[57] This popular assumption was readily accepted by the enemies of the pope's political ambitions, especially the numerous barons and princes of the Pontifical States, whom he had expelled from their territories. By August 25, the rumor of Alexander VI's poisoning has spread as far as Trieste.[58]

Cardinal Pietro Bembo, the distinguished Venetian Latinist and confidant of Lucretia de Borgia, was certain that Alexander VI was a victim of poison. In his Historiae Venetae, Bembo claimed that the pope departed this life by drinking, through a fatal mistake of a steward, the poison which he had secretly ordered to be given to Cardinal Adriano da Corneto, in whose country vineyard he took supper that August 5, along with Cesare.[59] He went on to add, "It was the the will of the immortal gods, that they who had killed with poison many princes of the Roman Republic, in order to obtain possession of their riches and treasures, should thus perish by their own act."[60]

Some thirty years after the death of Alexander VI, the famed Florentine historian, Francesco Guicciardini, wrote a detailed account of the pontiff's supposed death by poison. It was probably through the pen of Guicciardini that the vile Borgia legend first rooted itself. What follows is

Guicciardini's account of how the pope and Cesare were allegedly poisoned, taken from his History of Italy.

> The pope, who had gone to dine in a vineyard near he Vatican to escape the heat, was suddenly carried back to the apostolic palace, dying, and soon after him, his son was brought in, also on the brink of death. The following day, which was August 18, 1503, the body of the dead pope was borne, according to custom, to the Church of St. Peter: black, swollen and hideous to behold, most manifest signs of poisoning, but Valentino's life was spared because of the vigor of his youth, and because he had immediately used powerful and suitable antidotes to the poison, although he remained seriously ill for a long time. It was always believed that this episode was was the result of poison, and the most widespread rumor was that the affair had taken place the following way: that Valentino had determined to poison at that selfsame dinner Adriano da Corneto, Cardinal of Castellesi, in whose vineyard they were both supposed to dine (because it is clear that both father and son had frequently and habitually made use of poison, not only to take revenge against their enemies and secure themselves against suspicions, but also because of their wicked greed to separate the wealthy from their possessions, both amongst the cardinals and other members of the court, heedless of the fact that they had never been harmed in any way by these people, as had been the case with the very rich Cardinal of Sant'Angelo; and equally heedless of the fact that they had been on the very closest terms of friendship with some of them, and that others, like the cardinals of Capua and Modena, had been their most useful and faithful counselors). Thus it was bruited about that Valentino had prepared, in advance, certain flacons of wine infected with poison, which he consigned to a steward unaware of the plot, commanding him not to give them to anyone. But by chance it happened that the pontiff, before the dinner hour, became thirsty as a result of the overwhelming heat and asked that some drink be brought him and because the supplies for the

> dinner had not yet arrived from the palace, the steward, who believed that the most precious wine had been set aside for his keeping, gave the pope that wine to drink which Valentino had sent ahead, and that Valentino, arriving while his father was drinking, began similarly to drink of the same wine.[61]

Guicciardini attempts to qualify the reliability of his story by introducing phrases like "it was always believed" and "thus it was bruited about"; but his intent was, nevertheless, to assert that the pope was a victim of his own depraved machinations. Also, according to Guicciardini, the pope was carried back from Corneto's vineyard in a dying condition, and was a corpse the following day.[62] More credible sources, as we have seen, correctly state that the pope died a full two weeks after his fateful supper at the cardinal's villa. Guicciardini was also certain that Alexander and Cesare had fallen ill at the same time, but Giustiniani, who was actually in Rome at the time, clearly wrote that the pope was overtaken by sickness on August 10, and Cesare the following day.[62] How could they, therefore, be supposed to have taken the same poison at the same time?

Most of the writers who have followed Guicciardini have told similar stories and embellished his original. However these various accounts may differ in detail, all agree that greed for money was the main motive for their crimes. If this assumption is to believed, then Cardinal Adriano da Corneto

would have appeared as an odd target for the Borgia's scheme. As De Roo points out, Corneto, when still a bishop, was a modest cleric of the diocese of Corneto; earning his living by performing the duties of a papal secretary and treasurer at the pontifical court.[63] The death of this cardinal would certainly have not enriched the House of Borgia in any appreciable fashion.

Pope Alexander's death was perfectly normal, resulting from an all-too-common bout of fever. As already stated, Rome in the summer months was unendurable. The five popes who were Alexander's immediate predecessors died during the months of July and August. Calixtus III died on August 6, 1458, Pius II on August 15, 1464 (not in Rome but Ancona), Paul II on July 26, 1471, Sixtus IV on August 12, 1484, and Innocent VIII on July 25, 1492.[64]

Unlike Burchard or Giustiniani, Bembo, Guicciardini and all others who name Alexander VI as a victim of poison, were nowhere to near Rome during the pontiff's illness and subsequent death. The accounts of Burchard and Giustiniani are all the more reliable since their duties, as papal master of ceremonies and as ambassador accredited at the Roman court, brought them in continual contact with the pope. Since neither was particularly friendly towards Alexander VI or his family, it is doubtful that they would have failed to fully

investigate the pontiff's demise and to report anything that might possibly hint of scandal. Both men were completely silent on the subject of poison.

On August 19, the corpse of the pope was finally conveyed to its final resting place. It was brought before the main chapel of St. Peter's where the regular clergy of Rome assembled for the final requiem. Burchard described the great funerary pomp of the final procession.

> First came the cross, then the monks of St. Onofrio, the Paulist Fathers, the Franciscans, Augustinians and Carmelites, three brethren only of the Order of the Predicants together with the clergy of St. Peter's and the chamberlain of the Roman clergy in stole and pluviale with a few priests. About 140 torches were borne, for the most part by the clerics and beneficiaries of St. Peter's and by servants and retainers of the Pope. Then came the body. The beneficiaries and clerics surrounded the coffin without any order, and it was carried by the poor who had stood around it in the chapel, while four or six canons went beside them with their hands on the bier.[65]

Due to the rapid decomposition and swelling of the body, a cloth of tapestry was extended over it. According to Burchard, during the singing of the mass, some soldiers of the palace guard attempted to appropriate the torches that surrounded the pope's body. The attending clergy attempted to defend themselves against the soldiers and the soldiers turned their weapons against the clergy, who stopped their chanting and fled to the sacristy. The pope was left lying on the bier

unattended.[66] Later, fearing that the enemies of the late pontiff might want to take revenge upon him by defiling his mortal remains, Burchard and three others carried the corpse to another, more secluded chapel within St. Peter's and had it locked behind an iron railing.[67]

A quite different report of the pontiff's funeral was told in a letter from the marquis of Mantua, who had been giving asylum and protection to the barons and princes expelled by the Borgia from their dominions in the Pontifical States. This letter, published by Gregorovius as a historical document, serves as a vivid illustration of the level of hatred some felt towards Alexander, at a time when he was barely in his grave. The marquis wrote to his wife "The pope was carried to his grave without much honor. A half-crazy fellow dragged him with a rope fastened to his foot, from the bier to the place of his burial, for no one could be found willing to touch him. He received a most miserable sepulcher."[68]

In the meantime, the Sacred College had assembled in the church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva in order to make plans for the conclave, under the presidency of their dean, Cardinal Caraffa. Their first act was to appoint Archbishop Sachis as governor of Rome and assign him a personal guard of two hundred soldiers.[69] As we have seen in previous chapters,

the period of time between the demise of one pope and the election of another is one of great political and social unrest; many precautions had to be undertaken by the College to ensure a smooth period of transition. The office of the chamberlain was handed over to Cardinal Vera. Sachis and Vera were both entrusted with the supervision of the gates of Rome and of the populace and clergy.[70] The leaden seal of Alexander VI was broken in their presence and the papal ring handed over to the datary until the election of a new pope.[71]

On August 21, the cardinals made an offer of agreement with Cesare de Borgia, who, owing to his strength and youth, was just recovering from the terrible illness that had overtaken his father. He informed the cardinals, with great humility, that he was ready to do their bidding and was ready to take an oath of fidelity to the Sacred College. The next day he was confirmed in his office of captain general of the army of the Roman Church.[72]

Later, Cardinals Jacopo Casanova and Francesco Borgia met in one of the papal chambers with the task of taking an inventory of Alexander's possessions. They found the papal crown and two precious tiaras, as well as the rings which the pope had worn during official functions. In addition, they found a whole service of silver vessels used by the pope while officiating, as much as could be packed into eight large

chests.[73] Furthermore, a box filled with precious stones and rings was discovered in one of the pope's apartments; the value of these items was estimated at about 25,000 ducats. Also contained in this box were many legal papers, including the oaths of the cardinals and the bull of investiture for the kingdom of Naples.[74]

After much delay, the earthly remains of Alexander VI were brought back to the chapel of Our Lady of the Fever, within St. Peter's Basilica and deposited by six Vatican porters in the corner of the wall at the left of the altar, adjacent to the tomb of his uncle and mentor, Pope Calixtus III. Burchard noted that the two carpenters assigned to construct the pontiff's wooden coffin had made it too narrow and short. Burchard personally laid the pope's miter by his side, wrapping the body in an old carpet; while the two carpenters, using their fists, had to force the pope's body into the undersized coffin.[75] Aside from Burchard, no other priest or person was present at these final rites.

The death of Alexander VI in 1503 precipitated the downfall of the Borgia dynasty in Italy. Because both father and son were struck down by the same sickness simultaneously, the Borgia family was left in an utterly vulnerable position. When Cesare de Borgia finally recovered from his illness, Giuliano della Rovere, his father's most dangerous enemy, had been elected supreme pontiff. The Rome of Pope Julius II was inhospitable to the House of Borgia. Cesare's many enemies in Rome eventually forced him to flee the city. His might in Italy was gone, his power dissipated. Even his French father-in-law, King Louis XII, saw no profit in keeping faith with him. Cesare, landless and deprived of his titles, was forced to enter service as a mercenary. In 1507 Cesare de Borgia was mortally wounded during the siege of Viana. No longer a powerful prince of the Renaissance, he died as a simple soldier on the field of battle.

Lucretia de Borgia was the least deserving victim of contemporary authors bent on vilifying everything associated with Alexander VI and the Borgia name. Roman gossip-mongers did everything possible to slander the reputation of the pope's illegitimate daughter in an effort to tarnish her father's memory. Despite sincere efforts by serious historians to rehabilitate her much-maligned reputation, she remains the predominant symbol of Renaissance intrigue and

treachery. Her only crime was to be the daughter of a Borgia pope.

Pope Alexander VI's main goal was to transform the House of Borgia into one of Europe's leading princely families. His uncle, Calixtus III, saw that the Church was the most accessible vehicle to realize this mission, and made sure that his nephew was placed in a position to elevate the House of Borgia to the pinnacle of power. As we have seen, the Renaissance papacy was the perfect vehicle for an ambitious man to rise above his social class and wield considerable power over Europe's leading monarchs and princes. Alexander VI used the papacy to elevate himself, and his family. This fact did not make him unique. He was only one in a string of popes that acted more as secular princes than spiritual leaders. It is Alexander VI--the infamous Borgia pope--who continues to be blamed for the secularization and corruption of the Church.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. Andrea Leonetti, Papa Alessandro VI, Secondo Documenti e Carteggi del Tempo, vol. 3 (Bologna: Mareggiani, 1880), 30.

2. Peter de Roo, Material for a History of Pope Alexander VI, His Relatives and His Time, vol. 1 (New York: The Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1924), 1.

3. Ibid., 3.

4. Due to confusion in the orthography of the period, the surname was written variously in Italian and Spanish as Borja, Borge, Boria, Borjia, Borza, Borigia, and Borgia, which is the most commonly used form.

5. This Spanish document is reproduced in its entirety in the annex to De Roo's Alexander VI.

6. Orestes Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, Alexander VI, trans. F. J. Sheed (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1940), 26.

7. Ibid., 26.

8. Frederick Baron Corvo (Frederick William Rolfe), Chronicles of the House of Borgia (New York: Dover, 1962), 58-59.

9. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 27.

10. De Roo, Alexander VI, doc. 1 in annex to vol. 1.

11. Johann Burchard, Diarium Sive Rerum Urbanar. Commentarii 1483-1506, vol. 2, ed. L. Thuasne (Paris: n.p., 1883-85), 425.

12. Michael Mallett, The Borgias, the Rise and Fall of a Renaissance Dynasty (London: the Bodley Head, 1969), 82-83.

13. De Roo, Alexander VI, 12.

14. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Nicholas V, vol. 1, fol. 93. Reproduced by De Roo in the annex to vol. 1.

15. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Nicholas V, vol. 8,

fol. 219. Reproduced by De Roo in the annex to vol. 1.

16. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Paul II, Armarium 39, fol. 13. Reproduced by De Roo in the annex to vol. 1.

17. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Nicholas V, vol. 23, fol. 75. Reproduced by De Roo in the annex to vol. 1.

18. Mallett, The Borgias, 83.

19. Ibid., 84-85.

20. Leonetti, Alessandro VI, 523.

21. Mallett, The Borgias, 84.

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2. Michael Mallett, The Borgias, the Rise and Fall of a Renaissance Dynasty (London: The Bodley Head, 1969), 85.

3. Orestes Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, Alexander VI, trans. F. J. Sheed (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1940), 37.

4. Ibid., 37.

5. Ibid., 38.

6. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Calixtus III, 1456, fol. 109, quoted in De Roo, Alexander VI, 60.

7. Ibid., 61.

8. Ibid.

9. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Calixtus III, 1456-1457, fol. 195, quoted in De Roo, Alexander VI, 63.

10. Ludwig Pastor, The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, vol. 5, ed. F. I. Antrobus (St. Louis: B. Herder & Co., 1923), 320.

11. De Roo, Alexander VI, 68-69.

12. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Calixtus III, fol. 8. De Roo reproduces this document in the original Latin in the annex to vol. 2.

13. Ibid.

14. Andrea Leonetti, Papa Alessandro VI, Secondo Documenti e Carteggi del Tempo, vol. 1 (Bologna: Mareggiani, 1880), 106.

15. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 39.

16. De Roo, Alexander VI, 71.

17. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 40.

18. Ibid., 41.

19. Ferdinand Gregorovius, Lucretia Borgia, According to Original Documents and Correspondences of Her Day, trans. John Leslie Garner (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1958), 56.

20. De Roo, Alexander VI, 81-82.

21. Ibid.

22. Johann Burchard, Diarium Sive Rerum Urbanar. Commentarii 1483-1506, vol. 2, ed. L. Thuasne (Paris: n.p., 1883-85), 600, quoted in De Roo, Alexander VI, 79.

23. Ibid., 85.

24. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Calixtus III, 1457, vol. 18, fol. 25. De Roo reproduces this document in the original Latin in the annex to vol. 2.

25. Pastor, History of the Popes, 325.

26. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Pius II, 1460, vol. 8, fol. 214, quoted in De Roo, Alexander VI, 92.

27. Pastor, History of the Popes, 325.

28. Arnold H. Mathew, The Life and Times of Rodrigo Borgia, Pope Alexander VI (London: Stanley Paul & Co., 1912), 27.

29. De Roo, Alexander VI, 102-103.

30. Gregorovius, Lucretia Borgia, 5-6.

31. De Roo, Alexander VI, 102.

32. Frederick Baron Corvo (Frederick William Rolfe), Chronicles of the House of Borgia (New York: Dover, 1962), 57.

33. Ivan Cloulas, The Borgias, trans. Gilda Roberts (New York: Franklin Watts, 1989), 33.

34. Ibid., 33.

35. Mathew, Rodrigo Borgia, 35.

36. De Roo, Alexander VI, 106-107.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Cloulas, The Borgias, 34.

40. De Roo, Alexander VI, 109-110.

41. Ibid.

42. Cecilia M. Ady, Pius II (London: Methuen & Co., 1913), 327.

43. De Roo, Alexander VI, 113.

44. Mathew, Rodrigo Borgia, 35.

45. Leonetti, Alessandro VI, 165.

46. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Pius II, Brevia, vol. 9, fol 161. De Roo reproduces this document in the original Latin in the annex to vol. 2. He also provides his translation on page 115-117, vol. 2.

47. Ibid.

48. Leonetti, Alessandro VI, 166.

49. De Roo, Alexander VI, 121.

50. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Pius II, Brevia, vol. 9, fol. 163. De Roo reproduces this document in the original Latin in the annex to vol. 2.

51. Mathew, Rodrigo Borgia, 35.

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53. Mathew, Rodrigo Borgia, 27.

54. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 46.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., 47.

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2. Ludwig Pastor, The History of the Popes, from the Close of The Middle Ages, vol. 5, ed. F. I. Antrobus (St. Louis: B. Herder & Co., 1923), 375.

3. Orestes Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, Alexander VI, trans. F. J. Sheed (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1940), 89.

4. Peter de Roo, Material for a Life of Alexander VI, His Relatives and His Time, vol. 2, (New York: Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1924), 307.

5. Francesco Guicciardini, The History of Italy, trans. S. Alexander (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1968), 10.

6. Michael Mallett, The Borgias, the Rise and Fall of a Renaissance Dynasty (London: The bodley Head, 1069), 112.

7. De Roo, Alexander VI, 308.

8. Johann Burchard, Diarium Sive Rerum Urbanar. Commentarii 1483-1506, vol. 2, ed. L. Thuasne (Paris: n.p., 1883-85), 575.

9. De Roo, Alexander VI, 308.

10. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 89.

11. Mallett, The Borgias, 112.

12. De Roo, Alexander VI, 314; Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 90.

13. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 93.

14. Ibid.

15. De Roo, Alexander VI, 325.

16. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 92.

17. Guicciardini, The History of Italy, 9.

18. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 93.

19. De Roo, Alexander VI, 327.

20. Ibid., 314.

21. Mallett, The Borgias, 112.

22. Ibid., 113.

23. Nino Valeri, Storia D'Italia, vol. 2 (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1965), 133.

24. Pastor, History of the Popes, 381.

25. Ibid.

26. Mallett, The Borgias, 114.

27. De Roo, Alexander VI, 330.

28. Ibid., 331.

29. Sigismondo de Conti da Foligno, Le Storie dei Suoi Tempi dal 1475-1510, vol. 2 (Rome: n.p., 1883), 53.

30. Pastor, History of the Popes, 381.

31. Ibid., 383-384.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., 382.

34. Ibid., 383-384.

35. Stefano Infessura, Diario della Citta di Roma, ed. Orsete Tommasini (Rome: Forzani e C. Tipografi del Senato, 1890), 281.

36. Pastor, History of the Popes, 385.

37. Herbert M. Vaughan, The Medici Popes, (New York: Kennikat Press, 1971), 36.

38. Pastor, History of the Popes, 386.

39. Ibid.

40. De Roo, Alexander VI, 351-352.

41. Caterina Santoro, Gli Sforza (Rome: Dall'Oglio Editore, 1968), 267.

42. De Roo, Alexander VI, 352.

43. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 94.

44. Ibid., 95.

45. Ibid., 101.

46. Vaughan, The Medici Popes, 37.

47. Ferrera, The Borgia Popes, 95.

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2. Ferdinand Gregorovius, Lucretia Borgia, According to Original Documents and Correspondences of Her Day, trans. John Leslie Garner (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), 10.

3. Arnold H. Mathew, The Life and Times of Rodrigo Borgia, Pope Alexander VI (London: Stanley Paul & Co., 1912), 30.

4. Ibid.

5. Johann Burchard, Pope Alexander and His Court, Extracts from the Latin Diary of Johannes Burchardus, ed. F. L. Glaser (New York: n.p., 1962), 88.

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7. Peter de Roo, Material for a History of Alexander VI, His Relatives and His Time, vol 1. (New York: Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1924), 246.

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11. Marie Joseph Henri Ollivier, Le Pape Alexandre VI et les Borgia (Paris: Albanel, 1870), 57.

12. Mathew, Rodrigo Borgia, 77.

13. Orville Prescott, Princes of the Renaissance (New York: Random House, 1969), 41.

14. Ibid.

15. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 174.

16. De Roo, Alexander VI, 242-245.

17. Joan Haslip, Lucrezia Borgia (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1953), 8.

18. Gregorovius, Lucretia Borgia, 15.

19. Rafael Sabatini, The Life of Cesare Borgia (New York: Brentano's, 1924), 46.

20. Maria Bellonci, The Life and Times of Lucrezia Borgia, trans. Bernard and Barbara Wall (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1957), 47-48.

21. De Roo, Alexander VI, 243-244.

22. Francis S. Betten, "Lucrezia Borgia," The Historical Bulletin 9, no. 3 (1931): 55.

23. Ibid.

24. Sabatini, Cesare Borgia, 81.

25. Ibid., 174.

26. Ibid., 186.

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1. Peter de Roo, Material for a Life of Alexander VI, His Relatives and His Time, vol. 5 (New York: The Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1924), 217.

2. Orestes Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, Alexander VI, trans. F. J. Sheed (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1940), 153.

3. De Roo, Alexander VI, vol. 1, 89-90.

4. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 154.

5. Ferdinand Gregorovius, Lucretia Borgia, According to Original Documents and Correspondences of Her Day, trans. John Leslie Garner (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), 65.

6. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 154.

7. Gregorovius, Lucretia Borgia, 66.

8. De Roo, Alexander VI, 219.

9. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 156.

10. Stefano Infessura, Diario della Citta di Roma, ed. Oreste Tommasini (Rome: Forzani e C. Tipografi del Senato, 1890), 293.

11. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 157.

12. Gregorovius, Lucretia Borgia, 65.

13. Ludwig Pastor, The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, vol. 5, ed. F. I. Antrobus (St. Louis: B. Herder & Co., 1923), 416-417.

14. Ibid.

15. Gregorovius, Lucretia Borgia, 65.

16. De Roo, Alexander VI, 229.

17. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 161.

18. Ibid.

19. Sigismondo de Conti da Foligno, Le storie dei Suoi Tempi dal 1475-1510, vol. 2 (Rome: n.p., 1883), 61-62, quoted in Pastor, History of the Popes, 417.

20. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 163.

21. Ibid., 160.

22. Pastor, History of the Popes, 417.

23. Gregorovius, Lucretia Borgia, 66.

24. Pastor, History of the Popes, 417.

25. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 163.

26. Gregorovius, Lucretia Borgia, 67-68.

27. Ibid.

28. De Roo, Alexander VI, 233.

29. Ibid.

30. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Alexander VI, Diversa Camerae 1501-1503, vol. 54, fol. 146. De Roo reproduces this document in the original Latin in the annex to vol. 5.

31. De Roo, Alexander VI, 235.

32. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 162-163.

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2. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Alexander VI, Introitus and Exitus, vol. 527, quoted in De Roo, Alexander VI, 468.

3. Ibid.

4. Deocledio Redig de Campos, Art Treasures of the Vatican (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974), 69.

5. Ibid. 69.

6. Pinturicchio (1454-1513), Italian painter of the Umbrian school, whose full name was Bernardino di Betto di Biagio.

7. De Roo, Alexander VI, 469.

8. Ludwig Pastor, The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages, vol. 5, ed. F. I Antrobus (St. Louis: B. Herder & Co., 1923), 172.

9. Redig de Campos, Art Treasures, 69.

10. Giorgio Vasari, Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects, vol. 2, trans. Gaston Du C. de Vere (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1963), 717.

11. Redig de Campos, Art Treasures, 70.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., 71

14. Corrado Ricci, Pinturicchio: His Life, Work and Times (London: G. Bell, 1902), 102.

15. Hieronymous Porcius (or Porcarius), was a Roman patrician who was born and lived in Rome during the cardinalate and pontificate of Alexander VI. His best known

work is the Porcian commentary, wherein he reports the election of Cardinal de Borgia and his coronation as pope. De Roo describes him as a credible eyewitness in the annex to vol. 5.

16. Ferdinand Gregorovius, Lucretia Borgia, According to Original Documents and Correspondences of the Day, trans. John Leslie Garner (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), 9.

17. Vasari, Lives, 719.

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19. Pastor, Lives of the Popes, 174.

20. Maurizio Calvesi, Treasures of the Vatican (London: Sunday Times, 1962), 83.

21. Pastor, History of the Popes, 175.

22. Calvesi, Treasures of the Vatican, 82.

23. Ricci, Pinturicchio, 112.

24. Vasari, Lives, 720.

25. Ricci, Pinturicchio, 112.

26. Gregorovius, Lucretia Borgia, 134.

27. Arnold H. Mathew, The Life and Times of Rodrigo Borgia, Pope Alexander VI (London: Stanley Paul & Co., 1912), 386.

28. Ricci, Pinturicchio, 112.

29. Calvesi, Treasures of the Vatican, 83.

30. Ricci, Pinturicchio, 113.

31. Calvesi, Treasures of the Vatican, 83.

32. De Roo, Alexander VI, 118.

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34. Ricci, Pinturicchio, 115.

35. Ibid.

36. Calvesi, Treasure of the Vatican, 89.

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4. Orestes Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, Alexander VI, trans. F. J. Sheed (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1940), 183.

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6. Pastor, History of the Popes, 421.

7. Ibid., 422.

8. Ibid.

9. Johann Burchard, Pope Alexander VI and His Court, Extracts from the Latin Diary of Johannes Burchardus, ed. F. L. Glaser (New York: n.p., 1962), 70.

10. Pastor, History of the Popes, 425.

11. Burchard, Pope Alexander VI and His Court, 71.

12. Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince, trans. George Bull (New York: Penguin Books, 1961), 74.

13. Pastor, History of the Popes, 423.

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15. Jacob Burckhardt, The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (Vienna: Phaidon Press, 1954), 60.

16. Francesco Guicciardini, The History of Italy, trans. S. Alexander (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1968), 85.

17. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 185-186.

18. Ibid.

19. Pastor, History of the Popes, 431.

20. Mathew, Rodrigo Borgia, 188.

21. Pastor, History of the Popes, 435.

22. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 191.

23. Pastor, History of the Popes, 437-438.

24. Ibid., 439.

25. Herbert Lucas, Fra Girolamo Savonarola (London: Sands & Co., 1905), 113-114.

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27. Pasquale Villari, La Storia di Girolamo Savonarola e de' Suoi Tempi, vol. 1 (Florence: n.p., 1898), 239, quoted in Pastor, History of the Popes, 439.

28. Ibid., 439.

29. Guicciardini, History of Italy, 86.

30. Pastor, History of the Popes, 441-442.

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32. Mathew, Rodrigo Borgia, 274.

33. Machiavelli, The Prince, 77-75.

34. Pastor, History of the Popes, 445.

35. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 199.

36. Ibid., 200.

37. Pastor, History of the Popes, 449.

38. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 196.

39. Pastor, History of the Popes, 450-451.

40. Burchard, Pope Alexander VI and His Court, 81.

41. Peter de Roo, Material for a History of Alexander VI, His Relatives and His Time, vol. 3 (New York: Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1924), 162.

42. Pastor, History of the Popes, 453.

43. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 207.

44. De Roo, Alexander VI, 164.

45. Johann Burchard, Diarium Sive Rerum Urbanar. Commentarii 1483-1506, vol. 2, ed. L. Thuasne (Paris: n.p., 1883-85), 217-218, quoted in De Roo, Alexander VI, 166.

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6. Pastor, History of the Popes, 85.

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9. De Roo, Alexander VI, 15.

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n.p., 1567), 185, quoted in Pastor, The History of the Popes, 91.

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19. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Alexander VI, Bull of 1494, vol. 13, fol. 190, reprinted in the original Latin in annex to De Roo, vol. 5.

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35. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Alexander VI, Bull of 1500, vol. 6, fol. 127, reprinted in original Latin in annex to De Roo, vol. 5.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Burchard, Diarium, vol. 3, 113-118, quoted in Pastor, The History of the Popes, 91-93.

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40. Burchard, Alexander VI and His Court, 113.

41. Pastor, History of the Popes, 97.

42. De Roo, Alexander VI, 39.

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44. Pasquale Villari, Dispacci di Antonio Giustiniani, 1502-1505, vol. 1 (Florence: Successiori Le Monnier, 1876), 49.

45. Pastor, History of the Popes, 98.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., 99.

48. Burchard, Diarium, vol. 3, 141.

49. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Alexander VI, July 2, 1501, vol. 55, fol. 98. De Roo reproduces this document in the original document in the annex to vol. 5.

50. Ibid.

51. De Roo, Alexander VI, 51.

52. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Alexander VI, vol. 5, fol. 334, quoted in De Roo, 51.

53. Ibid.

54. Villari, Dispacci, vol. 1, 507.

55. Ibid.

56. Sigismondo de Conti da Foligno, Le Storie dei Suoi Tempi dal 1475-1510, vol 2. (Rome: n.p., 1883), 278-79.

57. Villari, Dispacci, vol. 1, 14.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid., 15.

60. Ibid., 28.

61. De Roo, Alexander VI, 60.

62. Villari, Dispacci, vol. 1, 58.

63. Ibid., 93.

64. Ibid., 178.

65. Ibid., 246.

66. Ibid., 251-252.

67. De Roo, Alexander VI, 62.

68. Ibid.

69. Pastor, History of the Popes, 101.

70. De Roo, Alexander VI, 62-63.

71. James Muldoon, "Papal Responsibility for the Infidel," The Catholic Historical Review 114, no. 1 (1978): 171.

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3. Ferdinand Gregorovius, Lucretia Borgia, According to Original Documents and Correspondences of Her Day, trans. John Leslie Garner (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), 180.

4. Ludwig Pastor, The History of the Popes, from the Close of the Middle Ages, vol. 5, ed. F. I. Antrobus (St. Louis: B. Herder & Co., 1923), 519.

5. Peter de Roo, Material for a History of Alexander VI, His Relatives and His Time, vol. 1, (New York: Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1924), 207.

6. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Alexander VI, 1492, vol. 7, fol. 470, Quoted in De Roo, Alexander VI, 208.

7. Gregorovius, Lucretia Borgia, 92.

8. Secret Archives of the Vatican: Alexander VI, 1492, vol. 7, fol. 464, reprinted in the original Latin in annex to De Roo, Alexander VI.

9. De Roo, Alexander VI, 210.

10. Ibid., 212.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Johann Burchard, Diarium Sive Rerum Urbanar. Commentarii 1483-1506, vol. 2, ed. L. Thuasne (Paris: n.p., 1883-85), 355.

14. Pastor, History of the Popes, 493.

15. De Roo, Alexander VI, 214-215.

16. Ibid.

17. Gregorovius, Lucretia Borgia, 105.

18. Giacomo Zurita, Anales de la Corona de Aragon, vol. 5 (Zaragoza, Spain: n.p., 1610), 123, quoted in Pastor, History of the Popes, 493.

19. This remark in Burchard's diary proves that Alexander's paternity was not a secret even during the pope's lifetime.

20. Burchard, Pope Alexander and His Court, 88.

21. Andrea Leonetti, Alessandro VI, Secondo Documenti e Carteggi del Tempo, vol. 2 (Bologna: Mareggiani, 1880), 228.

22. Ferrera, The Borgia Pope, 242.

23. Burchard, Pope Alexander and His Court, 88.

24. Ibid.

25. E. R. Chamberlain, The Fall of the House of Borgia (New York: Dorset Press, 1974), 148.

26. Burchard, Pope Alexander and His Court, 88. Pastor, History of the Popes, 494.

27. Burchard, Pope Alexander and His Court, 89.

28. De Roo, Alexander VI, 220.

29. Burchard, Pope Alexander and His Court, 90.

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31. Ibid.

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